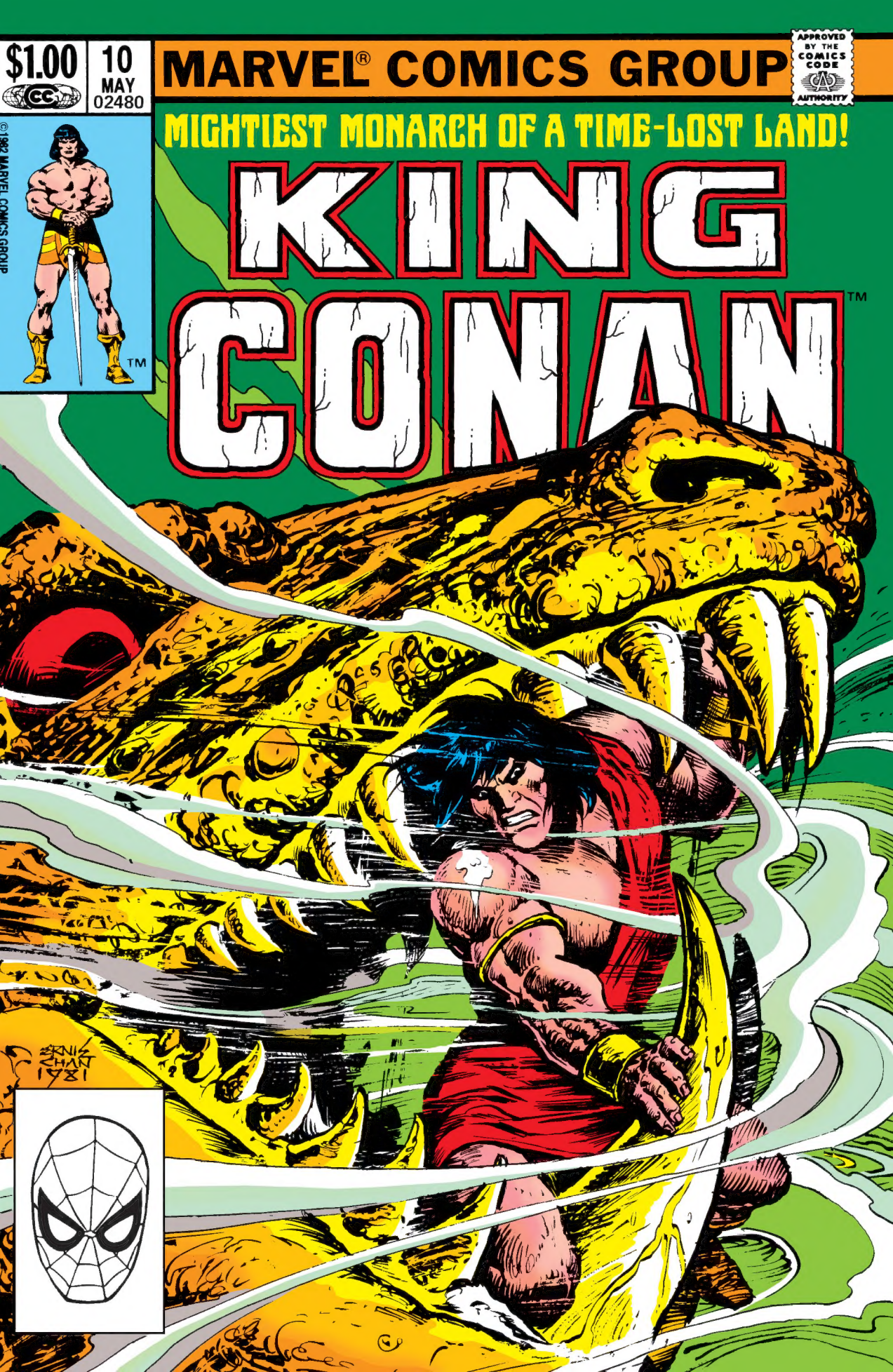
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MIGHTIEST MONARCH OF A TIME-LOST LAND!
KING CONAN™
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™
BERNIE WRIGHTSON 1981

STAN LEE PRESENTS: KING CONAN
Featuring The Epic Adventurer Created By ROBERT E. HOWARD
THE FANG OF SET
IN THE GRAVELED COURTYARD OF THE PALACE IN TARANTIA, KING CONAN SMILES WITH PRIDE AND AMUSEMENT.
THE MAN IS LARGE, STRONG AND FULLY SKILLED IN THE WAYS OF IRON--AS BEFITS A ROYAL TUTOR OF THE SWORD.
YET THE YOUTH ATTACKS WITH A FIERCENESS THAT SHOWS NO DEFERENCE FOR HIS MORE-PROFICIENT OPPONENT--AS BEFITS THE SON OF A KING, THE SON OF CONAN.
EXCELLENT, CONN-- YOU HAVE REMEMBERED MY ADVICE TO PRESS THE ATTACK!
BUT SEE HOW EASILY SUCH AN ATTACK MAY BE PARRIED!
AH, WELL, SO THE LAD STILL HAS MUCH TO LEARN...
DOUG MOENCH WRITER
ERNIE CHAN ARTIST
JANICE CHIANG LETTERER
GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORIST
LOUISE JONES EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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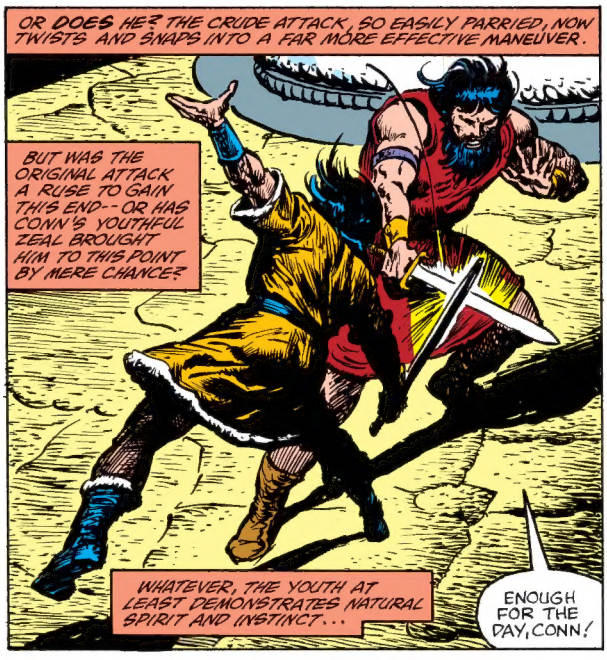
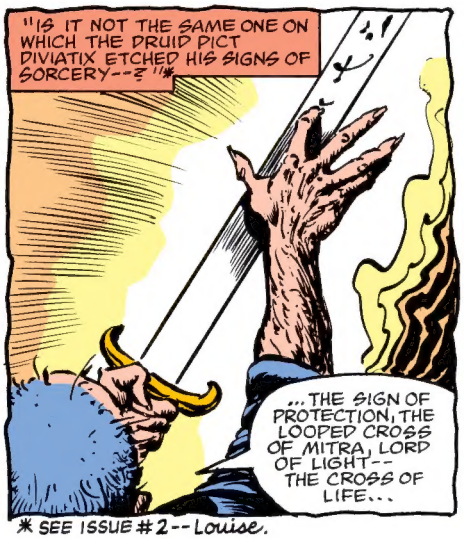

OR DOES HE? THE CRUDE ATTACK, SO EASILY PARRIED, NOW TWISTS AND SNAPS INTO A FAR MORE EFFECTIVE MANEUVER.
BUT WAS THE ORIGINAL ATTACK A RUSE TO GAIN THIS END--OR HAS CONN'S YOUTHFUL ZEAL BROUGHT HIM TO THIS POINT BY MERE CHANCE?
WHATEVER, THE YOUTH AT LEAST DEMONSTRATES NATURAL SPIRIT AND INSTINCT...
ENOUGH FOR THE DAY, CONN!

...AND WATCHING FROM A DISTANCE, CONAN AGAIN PERMITS HIMSELF A BRIEF SMILE.
YOUR IMPROVEMENT IS RAPID, LAD.
THANK YOU, BOLSAT.
I TRY.

AND YET, THINKS CONAN, A DISPLAY OF TOO MUCH PRIDE AT THIS POINT MIGHT ACTUALLY HINDER HIS SON'S PROGRESS...
AYE, BOLSAT, THE YOUTH LEARNS SWIFTLY...

...BUT MAYHAP HE'S HAD SOME HELP, EH?
A GOOD WARRIOR NEEDS FOUR THINGS--A FIERCE HEART, A SHARP MIND, A STRONG ARM, AND A STOUT BLADE.
NOW, ABOUT THE BLADE...

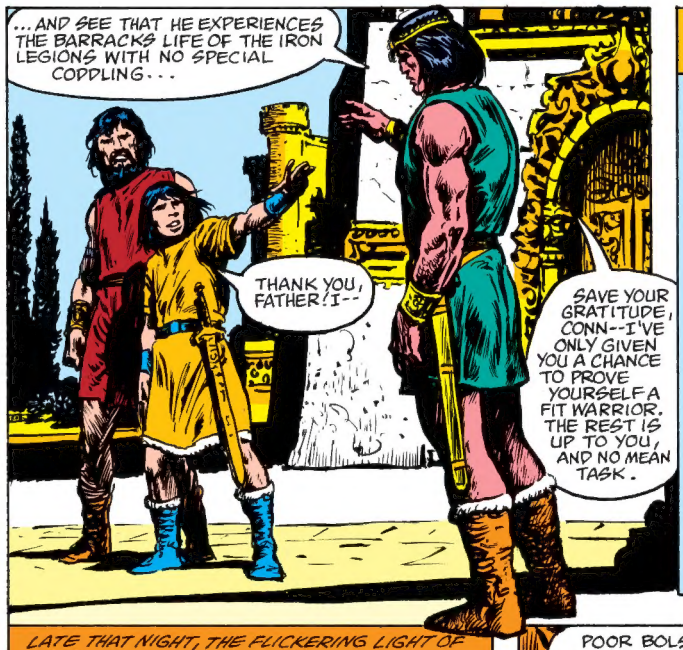

"IS IT NOT THE SAME ONE ON WHICH THE DRUID PICT DIVIATIX ETCHED HIS SIGNS OF SORCERY--?"*
...THE SIGN OF PROTECTION, THE LOOPED CROSS OF MITRA, LORD OF LIGHT--THE CROSS OF LIFE...

AND IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT MY SON'S SKILLS COMES AS MUCH FROM THE RUNES ON THE BLADE AS FROM THE SINEWS OF HIS OWN ARM?
AYE, MY KING--'TIS INDEED A POSSIBILITY...
BUT...

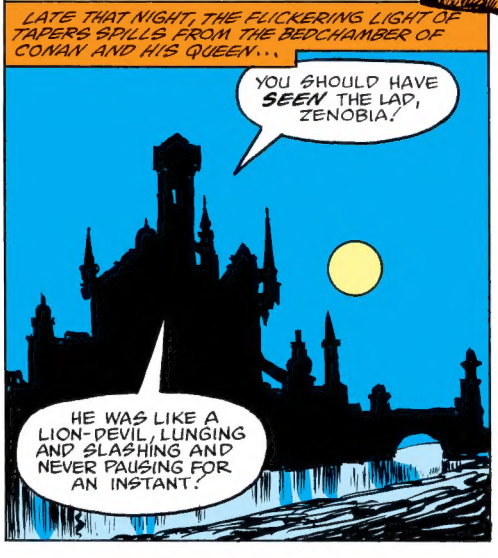
* SEE ISSUE #2--Louise.

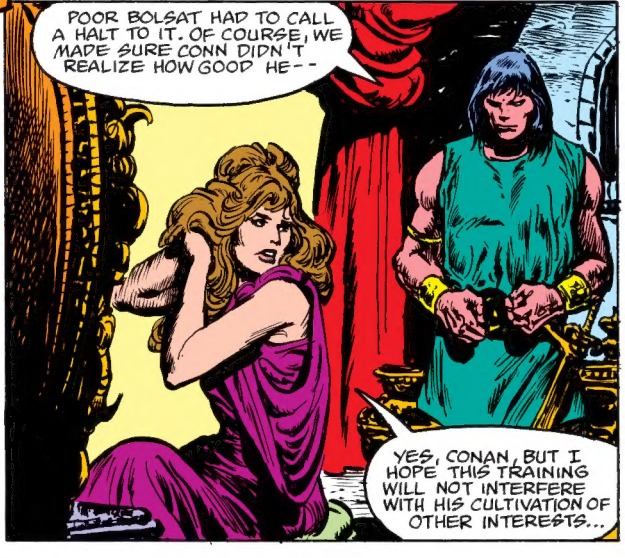
AND, TOO, EVEN THOUGH THE LAD HAS GROWN QUICKLY, HE IS STILL AFTER ALL A BOY--FAR FROM HIS PEAK OF STATURE AND STRENGTH.
AYE, BOLSAT, WE MUSTN'T OVERLOOK THAT FACT--DESPITE HIS SUCCESSFUL TEST OF MANHOOD.*
BUT...
*LAST ISSUE--L.

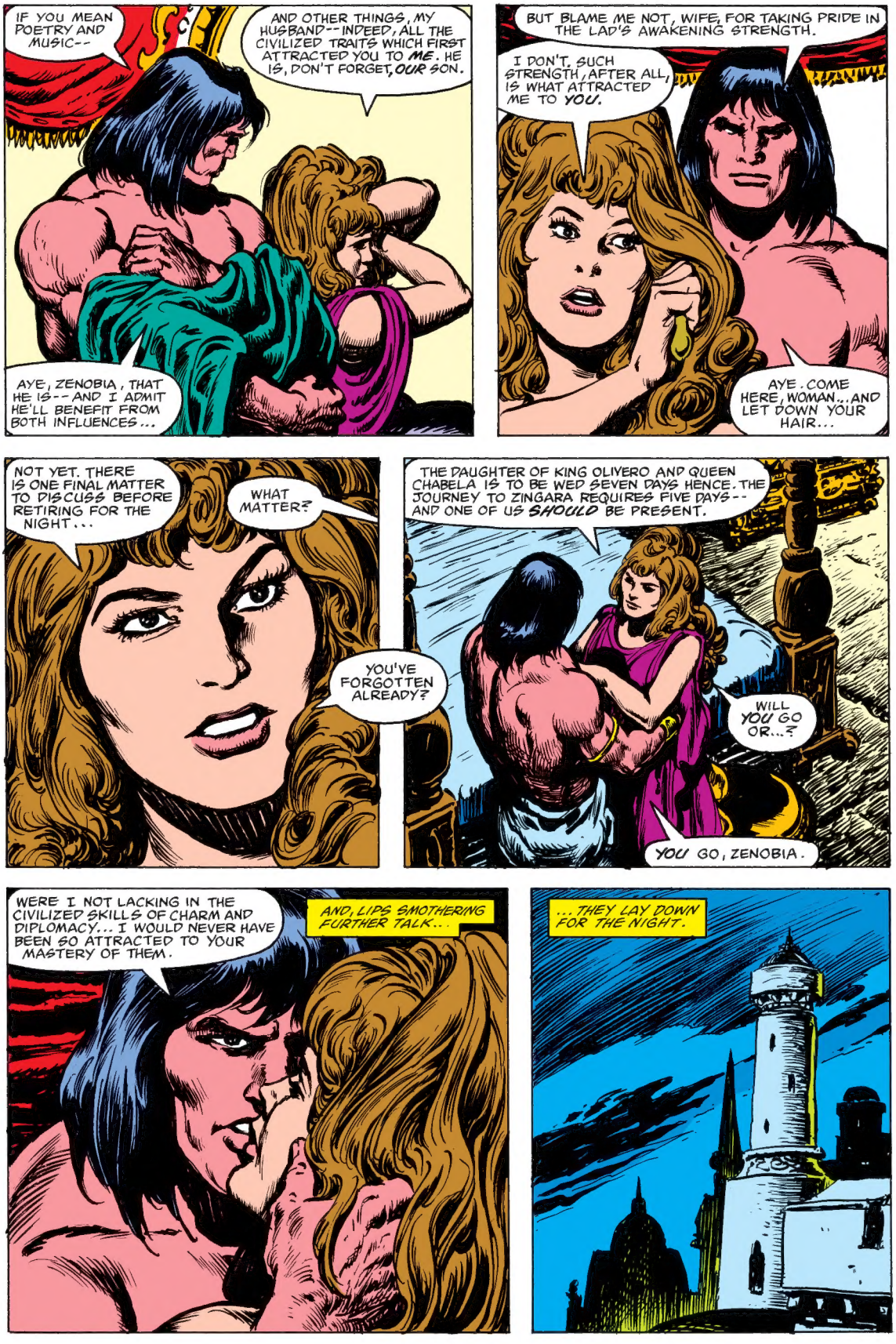
NEVERTHELESS, O KING, A MONTH OR TWO OF HARD TRAINING WITH THE TROOPS WOULD NOT BE OUT OF ORDER...
YOU...YOU MEAN IT?
AYE, READY OR NOT, IT CAN'T HURT. OFF TO FORT THANDARA WITH HIM, THEN...

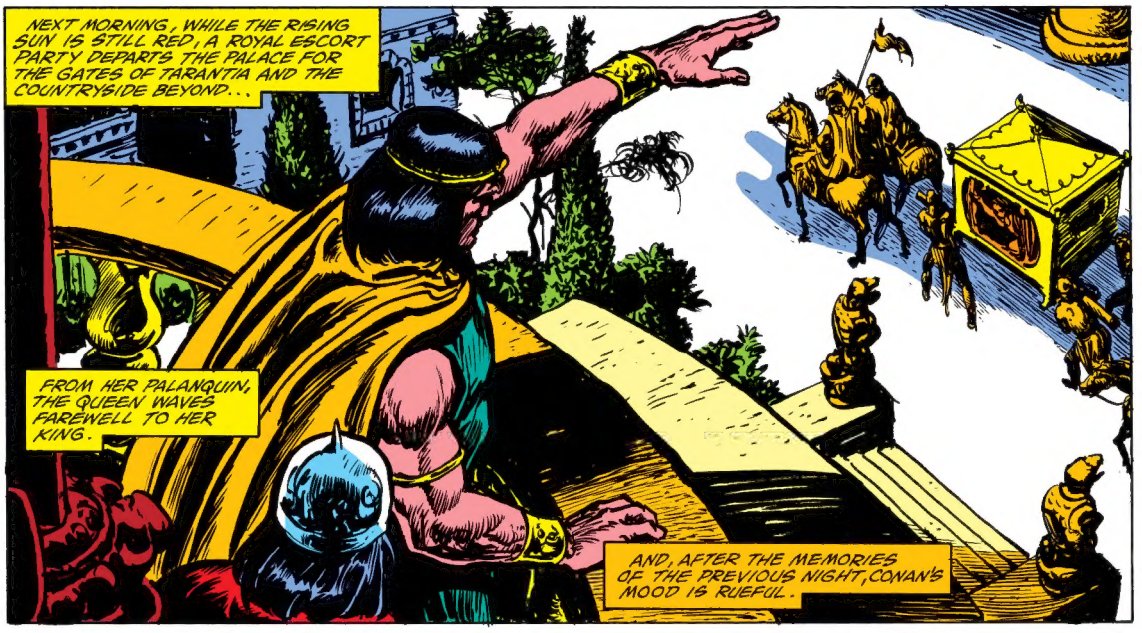

...AND SEE THAT HE EXPERIENCES THE BARRACKS LIFE OF THE IRON LEGIONS WITH NO SPECIAL CODDLING...
THANK YOU, FATHER! I--
SAVE YOUR GRATITUDE, CONN--I'VE ONLY GIVEN YOU A CHANCE TO PROVE YOURSELF A FIT WARRIOR. THE REST IS UP TO YOU, AND NO MEAN TASK.

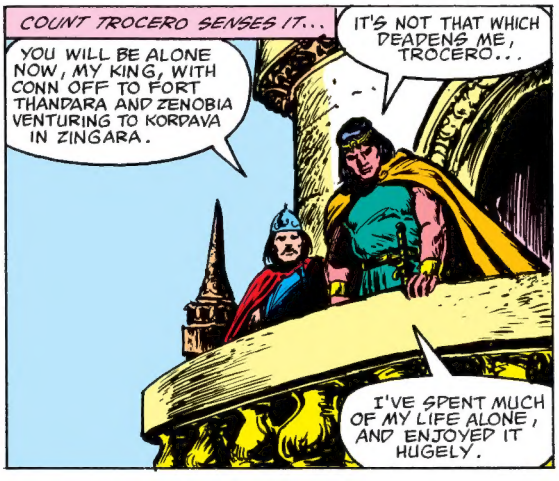
YET, WATCHING HIS SON DEPART, CONAN ENJOYS A THIRD SMILE THIS DAY, HARBORING NO DOUBT THAT CONN WILL SUCCEED.
AFTER ALL, THE BOY IS THE SON OF A THIEF, A MERCENARY, AN ADVENTURER, PIRATE AND KING.


LATE THAT NIGHT, THE FLICKERING LIGHT OF TAPERS SPILLS FROM THE BEDCHAMBER OF CONAN AND HIS QUEEN...
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE LAD, ZENOBIA!
HE WAS LIKE A LION-DEVIL, LUNGING AND SLASHING AND NEVER PAUSING FOR AN INSTANT!


POOR BOLSAT HAD TO CALL A HALT TO IT. OF COURSE, WE MADE SURE CONN DIDN'T REALIZE HOW GOOD HE--
YES, CONAN, BUT I HOPE THIS TRAINING WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH HIS CULTIVATION OF OTHER INTERESTS...

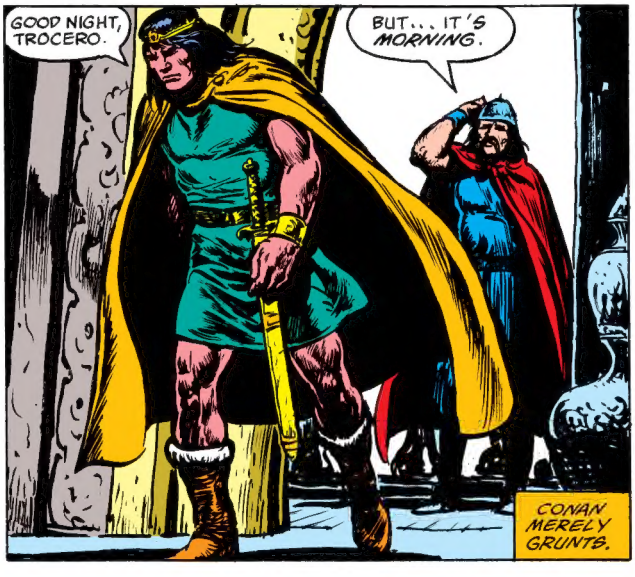

IF YOU MEAN POETRY AND MUSIC--
AND OTHER THINGS, MY HUSBAND--INDEED, ALL THE CIVILIZED TRAITS WHICH FIRST ATTRACTED YOU TO ME. HE IS, DON'T FORGET, OUR SON.
AYE, ZENOBIA, THAT HE IS--AND I ADMIT HE'LL BENEFIT FROM BOTH INFLUENCES...
BUT BLAME ME NOT, WIFE, FOR TAKING PRIDE IN THE LAD'S AWAKENING STRENGTH.
I DON'T. SUCH STRENGTH, AFTER ALL, IS WHAT ATTRACTED ME TO YOU.
AYE. COME HERE, WOMAN...AND LET DOWN YOUR HAIR...
NOT YET. THERE IS ONE FINAL MATTER TO DISCUSS BEFORE RETIRING FOR THE NIGHT...
WHAT MATTER?
YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ALREADY?
THE DAUGHTER OF KING OLIVERO AND QUEEN CHABELA IS TO BE WED SEVEN DAYS HENCE. THE JOURNEY TO ZINGARA REQUIRES FIVE DAYS--AND ONE OF US SHOULD BE PRESENT.
WILL YOU GO OR...?
YOU GO, ZENOBIA.
WERE I NOT LACKING IN THE CIVILIZED SKILLS OF CHARM AND DIPLOMACY... I WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN SO ATTRACTED TO YOUR MASTERY OF THEM.
AND, LIPS SMOTHERING FURTHER TALK...
...THEY LAY DOWN FOR THE NIGHT.

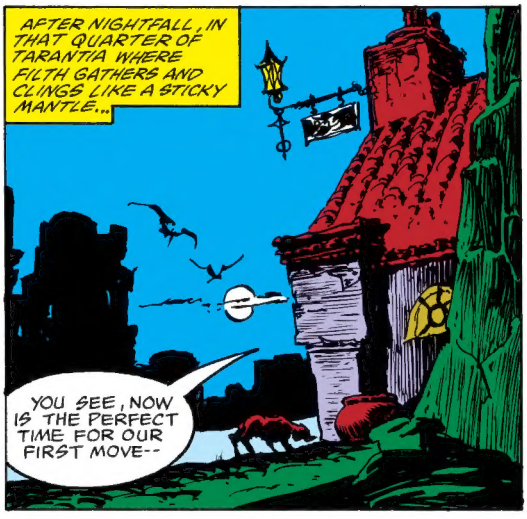

NEXT MORNING, WHILE THE RISING SUN IS STILL RED, A ROYAL ESCORT PARTY DEPARTS THE PALACE FOR THE GATES OF TARANTIA AND THE COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND...
FROM HER PALANQUIN, THE QUEEN WAVES FAREWELL TO HER KING.
AND, AFTER THE MEMORIES OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, CONAN'S MOOD IS RUEFUL.

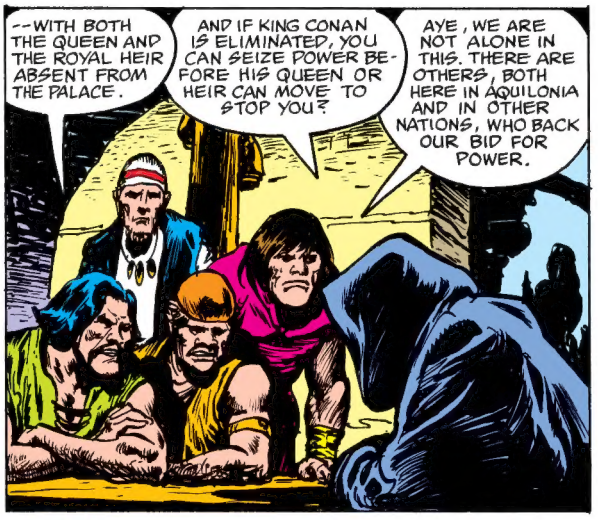

COUNT TROCERO SENSES IT...
YOU WILL BE ALONE NOW, MY KING, WITH CONN OFF TO FORT THANDARA AND ZENOBIA VENTURING TO KORDAVA IN ZINGARA.
IT'S NOT THAT WHICH DEADENS ME, TROCERO...
I'VE SPENT MUCH OF MY LIFE ALONE, AND ENJOYED IT HUGELY.

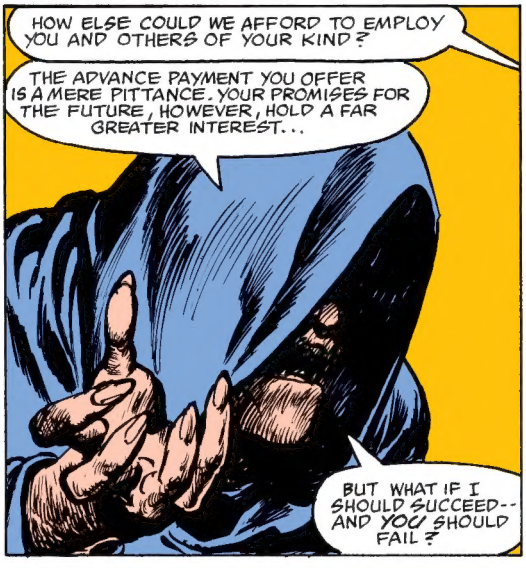
WHAT THEN, MY KING?
I... I DON'T KNOW. MAYHAP THE COMBINATION OF BEING ALONE AND... AND THIS PALACE...
...THE STATE OF PEACE WE'RE IN...
THE STATE OF PEACE--?

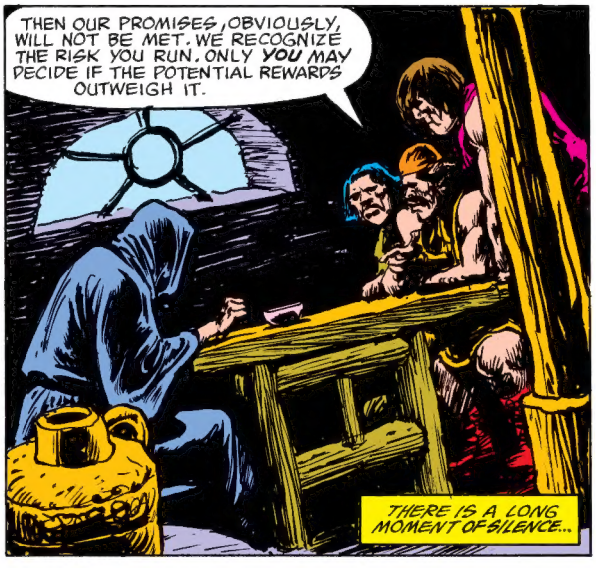
AYE. PEACE IS FINE IF A MAN HAS SOMETHING ELSE TO DO, BUT PEACE AND BEING ALONE--IDLENESS AND SOLITUDE--INSPIRE NAUGHT BUT SLEEP.


GOOD NIGHT, TROCERO.
BUT... IT'S MORNING.
CONAN MERELY GRUNTS.


AFTER NIGHTFALL, IN THAT QUARTER OF TARANTIA WHERE FILTH GATHERS AND CLINGS LIKE A STICKY MANTLE...
YOU SEE, NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR OUR FIRST MOVE--


--WITH BOTH THE QUEEN AND THE ROYAL HEIR ABSENT FROM THE PALACE.
AND IF KING CONAN IS ELIMINATED, YOU CAN SEIZE POWER BEFORE HIS QUEEN OR HEIR CAN MOVE TO STOP YOU?
AYE, WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS. THERE ARE OTHERS, BOTH HERE IN AQUILONIA AND IN OTHER NATIONS, WHO BACK OUR BID FOR POWER.


HOW ELSE COULD WE AFFORD TO EMPLOY YOU AND OTHERS OF YOUR KIND?
THE ADVANCE PAYMENT YOU OFFER IS A MERE PITTANCE. YOUR PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, HOLD A FAR GREATER INTEREST...
BUT WHAT IF I SHOULD SUCCEED--AND YOU SHOULD FAIL?


THEN OUR PROMISES, OBVIOUSLY, WILL NOT BE MET. WE RECOGNIZE THE RISK YOU RUN. ONLY YOU MAY DECIDE IF THE POTENTIAL REWARDS OUTWEIGH IT.
THERE IS A LONG MOMENT OF SILENCE...

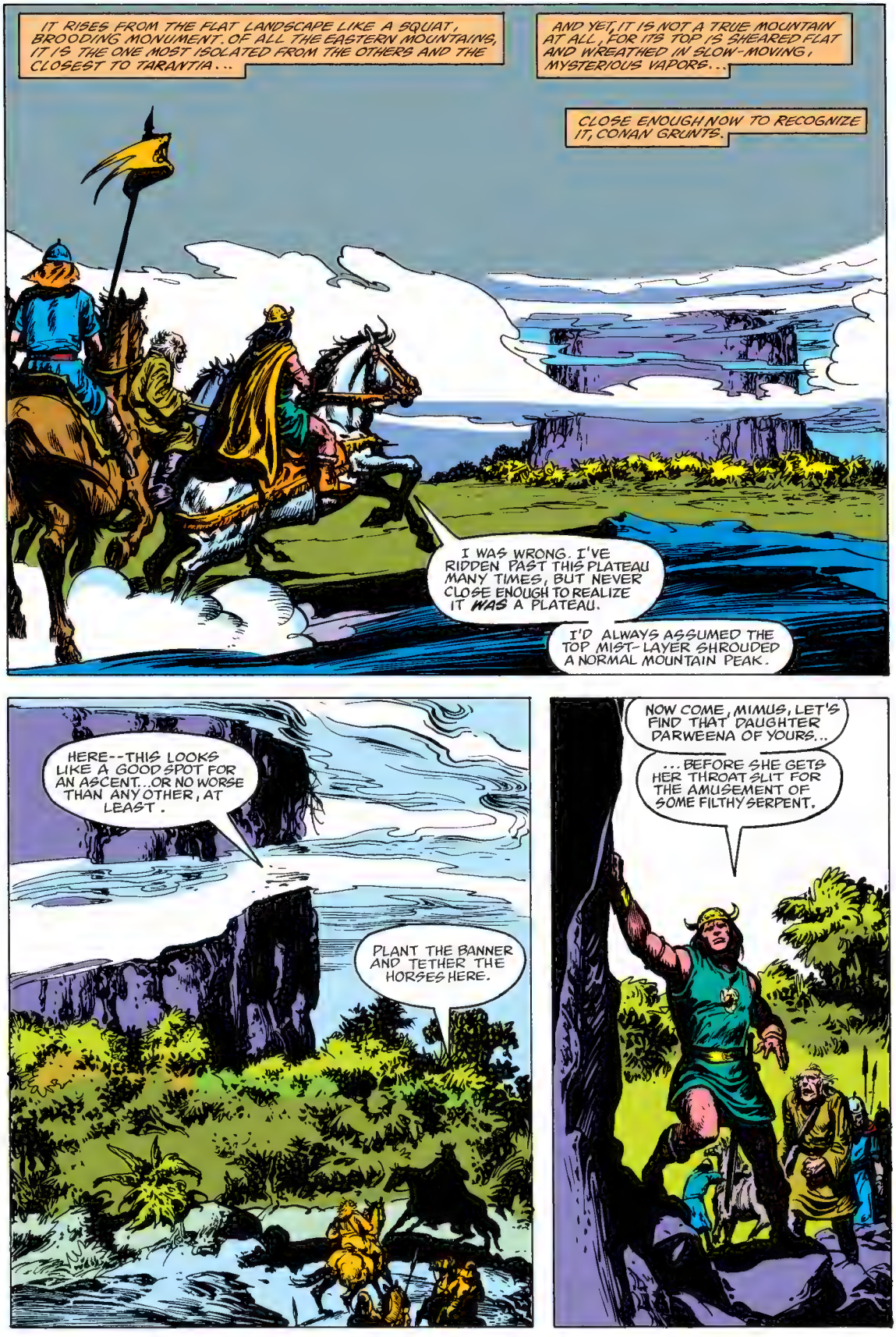
...BEFORE THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE SPEAKS SOFTLY FROM THE SHADOWS OF HIS COWL...
VERY WELL. I SHALL ELIMINATE KING CONAN FOR YOU. BUT FIRST YOUR ADVANCE PAYMENT MUST BE... SWEETENED.
SWEETENED--?

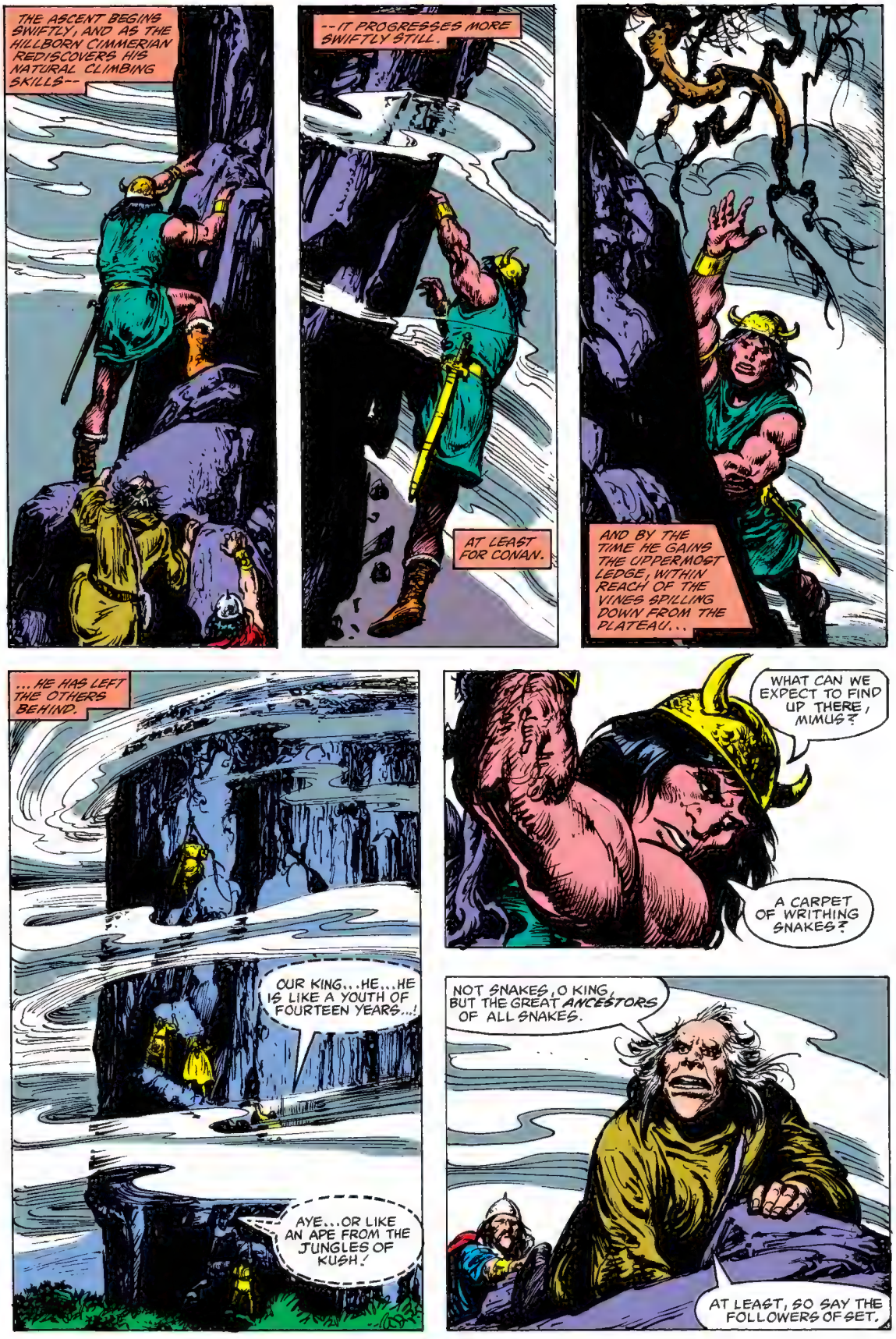
YES--MUCH AS THE LOTUS-EATER CRAVES HIS BLOSSOMS, I CRAVE... SWEETMEAT. IT IS LIKE AN ADDICTION WITH ME.
FEARING EXTORTION OF A HIGHER ORDER, THE REBEL CONSPIRATORS GRIN WITH RELIEF.
THEN YOU SHALL HAVE ALL THE SWEETMEAT YOUR BELLY CAN HOLD! TAVERNER!

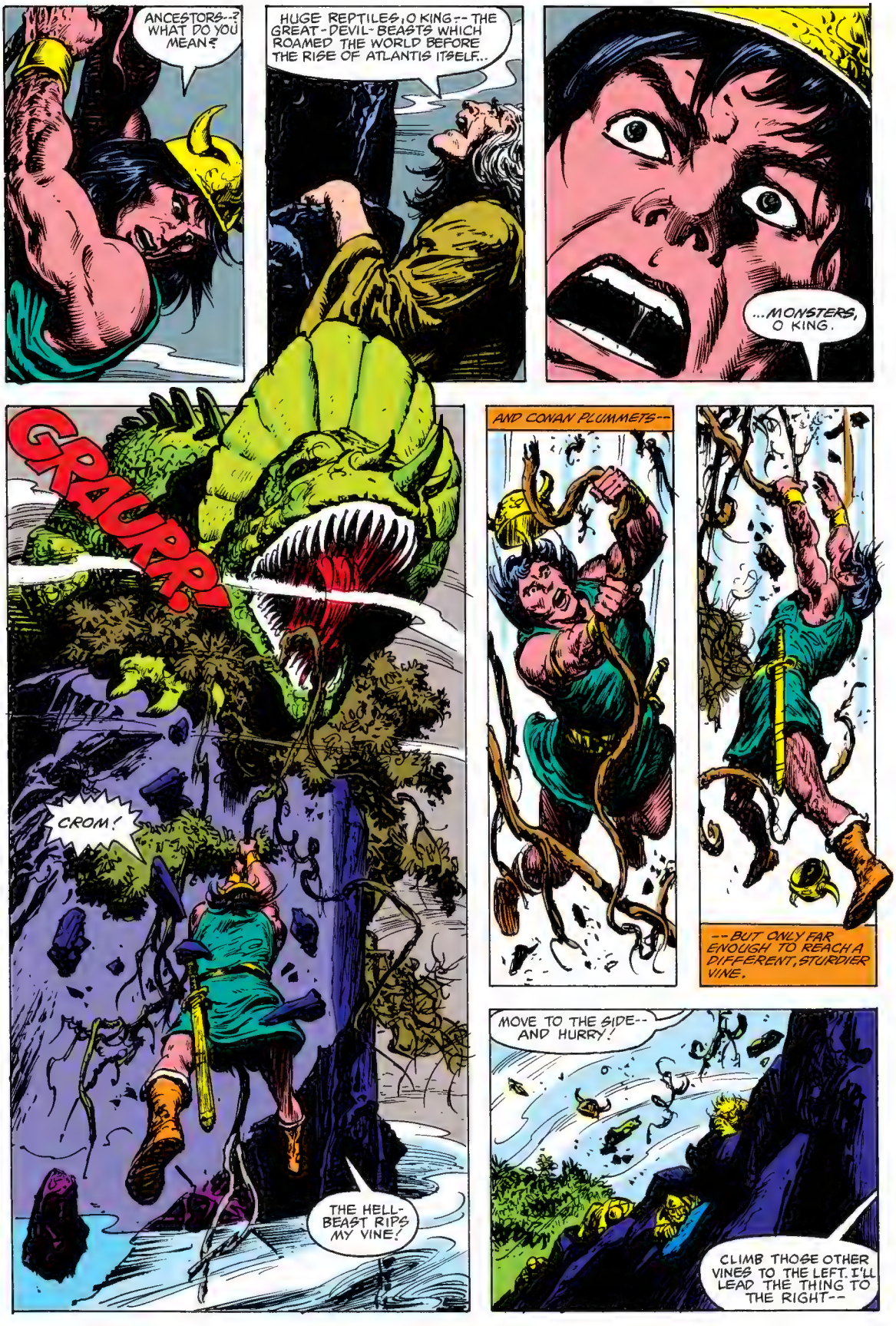
IN CONAN'S THRONEROOM THE FOLLOWING DAY, TROCERO'S WORRIES ARE SOMEWHAT EASED.
RATHER THAN SLEEPING, THE KING HAS AGREED TO FACE THE LINE OF PETITIONERS STRETCHING ALL THE WAY OUT OF THE PALACE AND INTO THE STREET...
--TAXED BY BOTH POITAIN AND AQUILONIA! I AM A POOR FARMER, MY KING, AND CAN-NOT AFFORD TO--
ENOUGH, MAN.
TROCERO--YOU'RE A COUNT OF POITAIN. DOES THIS MAN SPEAK THE TRUTH? IS HE TAXED BY TWO TREASURIES?
AH, YES, O KING. SINCE POITAIN BE-CAME A PROVINCE OF AQUILONIA--
MITRA! YOU MEAN ALL OUR PROVINCES ARE TAXED DOUBLE?!
WHY HAVEN'T I HEARD OF THIS BEFORE?!
YOU, AH, NORMALLY CONFINE YOUR RULE TO THE MILITARY, O KING, AND QUEEN ZENOBIA HANDLES--
I BEG TO INTER-RUPT, MY KING, BUT ZENOBIA IS A FAIR QUEEN WHO REGULARLY RETURNS THE AQUI-LONIAN PORTION OF OUR TAXES. NOW THAT SHE IS GONE, HOWEVER, YESTER-DAY'S COLLECTION BY THE AQUILONIAN TREASURY WAS--
BY CROM, 'TIS MADNESS! HOW MAY AN HONEST MAN BE EXPECTED TO WORK HARD IF HIS COIN IS SEIZED BY THE TAX COLLECTOR? AND ZENOBIA'S DIPLOMACY--!
NO DOUBT IT SOOTHES RUFFLED FEATHERS AND IS THE MOST PRACTICAL SOLUTION BUT, BY CROM, IT BOILS MY BLOOD!

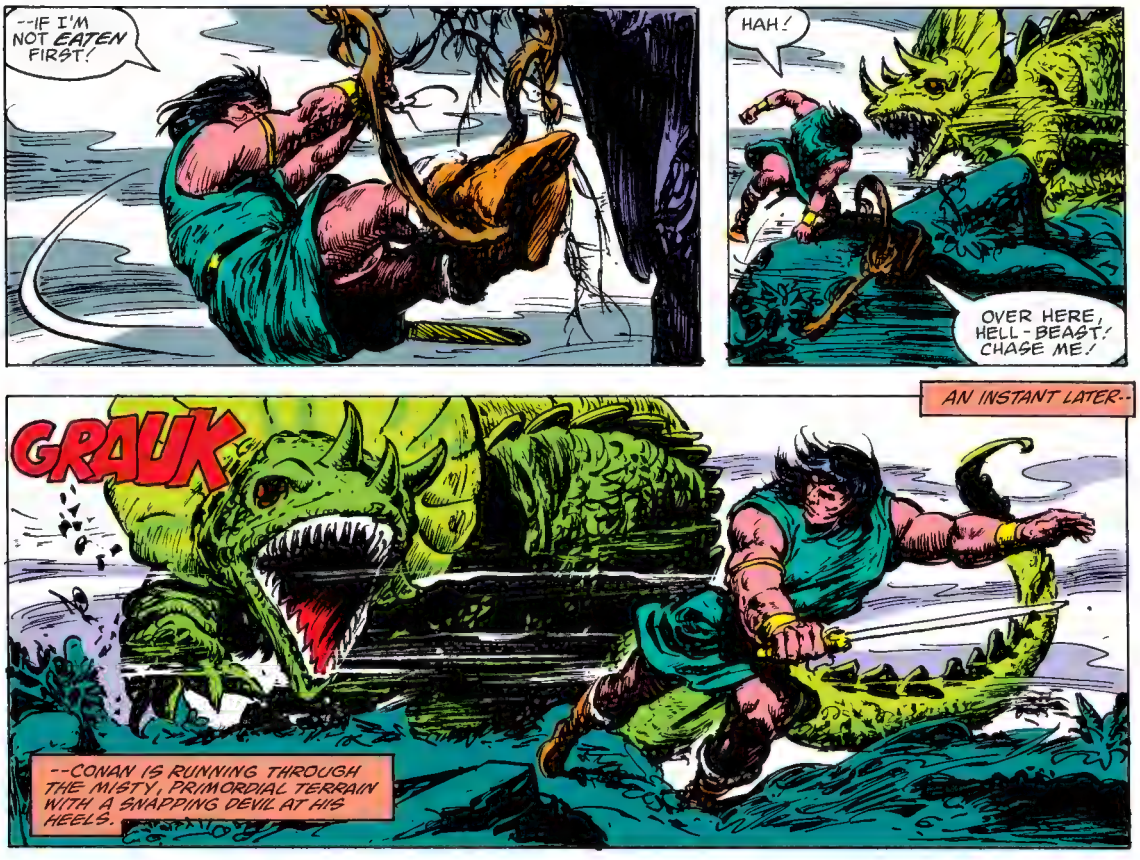
HENCEFORTH A NEW EDICT--EVERY MAN IN THE KINGDOM SHALL PAY A LIKE TAX! IN THOSE PROVINCES UNDER BOTH AQUILONIAN AND LOCAL RULE--
--THE TAX SHALL BE DIVIDED EVENLY BETWEEN THE TWO TREASURIES!
THANK YOU, MY KING--THE ENTIRE REALM THANKS YOU!
CROM'S BLOOD, TROCERO, IS THIS WHAT ZENOBIA MUST DEAL WITH EVERY DAY?
AYE, CONAN, AND DEAL WITH IT SHE DOES--VERY WELL.
THEN SHE'S MADE OF STERNER STUFF THAN I, FOR SUCH MATTERS SUIT ME ILL...AND WOULD DRIVE ME MAD.
ENOUGH PETITIONS FOR ONE DAY!
WHATEVER YOUR REQUESTS OR GRIEVANCES, THEY CAN WAIT FOR ANOTHER TIME--PREFERABLY AFTER QUEEN ZENOBIA RETURNS.
NO, MY KING! PLEASE--!
DO NOT DENY ME MY ONLY RECOURSE! DO NOT DENY MY VERY DAUGHTER!
YOUR DAUGHTER, MAN? WHAT DO YOU--
SHE WAS ABDUCTED LAST NIGHT, O KING, BY FOLLOWERS OF THE SERPENT-GOD, SET! THEY MEAN TO SACRIFICE HER TO THE FATHER OF ALL REPTILES!
THE FOLLOWERS OF SET HERE IN AQUILONIA--IN TARANTIA?
AYE, MY KING, THEY CAN BE FOUND ANYWHERE, OFTEN MASKING THEMSELVES AS GOOD MEN AND TRUE, PRETENDING TO BE FOLLOWERS OF MITRA OR TARIM OR ERLIK--EVEN CROM!
THE SOLDIERS TURNED ME AWAY, O KING, SAYING THEY ARE NOT EMPOWERED TO LEAVE THE CITY'S GATES WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORITY.
YES, YES...

TROCERO, TAKE A SMALL COMPANY OF THE BLACK DRAGONS AND HELP THIS MAN TO FIND HIS--
NO, BY CROM, THIS PALACE AND ITS EMPTY MARBLE HALLS WEARY ME--I'LL LEAD THE EXPEDITION MYSELF!
AS YOU WISH, MY KING, BUT IS IT WISE TO LEAVE THE PALACE NOW THAT YOUR QUEEN AND HEIR--
DUKE PROSPERO WILL SERVE AS REGENT WHILE I'M GONE! TO HORSES, TROCERO--WE'VE FINALLY A CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING!
AND SO, WITHIN THE HOUR...
YOU SAY YOUR NAME IS MIMUS?
YES, O KING, A POOR MERCHANT IN THE SOUTHERN QUARTER OF THE CITY.
I WAS LATE IN TAKING MY INVENTORY LAST NIGHT AND WHEN I RETURNED HOME I SAW THE DEVILS CARRYING DARWEENA OFF INTO THE NIGHT.
AND YOU OVERHEARD THEIR PLANS TO SACRIFICE HER--AS WELL AS THE SITE OF THIS SACRIFICE?
YES--THEY'VE TAKEN HER TO THE PLATEAU OF MIST, NEAR THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS.
I KNOW NO SUCH "PLATEAU OF MIST," MIMUS.
IT EXISTS NONETHELESS, O KING, AND IF YOU WILL INDULGE ME FOR SAYING SO...
...AQUILONIA IS A LARGE KINGDOM, AND HOLDS MANY SECRETS EVEN A WELL-TRAVELED KING MAY NOT KNOW.

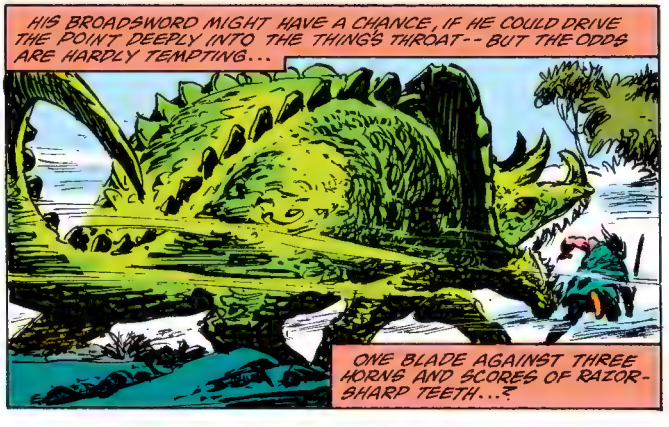

IT RISES FROM THE FLAT LANDSCAPE LIKE A SQUAT, BROODING MONUMENT. OF ALL THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS, IT IS THE ONE MOST ISOLATED FROM THE OTHERS AND THE CLOSEST TO TARANTIA...
AND YET, IT IS NOT A TRUE MOUNTAIN AT ALL, FOR ITS TOP IS SHEARED FLAT AND WREATHED IN SLOW-MOVING, MYSTERIOUS VAPORS...
CLOSE ENOUGH NOW TO RECOGNIZE IT, CONAN GRUNTS.
I WAS WRONG. I'VE RIDDEN PAST THIS PLATEAU MANY TIMES, BUT NEVER CLOSE ENOUGH TO REALIZE IT *WAS* A PLATEAU.
I'D ALWAYS ASSUMED THE TOP MIST-LAYER SHROUDED A NORMAL MOUNTAIN PEAK.
HERE--THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD SPOT FOR AN ASCENT...OR NO WORSE THAN ANY OTHER, AT LEAST.
PLANT THE BANNER AND TETHER THE HORSES HERE.
NOW COME, MIMUS, LET'S FIND THAT DAUGHTER DARWEENA OF YOURS...
...BEFORE SHE GETS HER THROAT SLIT FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF SOME FILTHY SERPENT.


THE ASCENT BEGINS SWIFTLY, AND AS THE HILLBORN CIMMERIAN REDISCOVERS HIS NATURAL CLIMBING SKILLS--
--IT PROGRESSES MORE SWIFTLY STILL.
AT LEAST FOR CONAN.
AND BY THE TIME HE GAINS THE UPPERMOST LEDGE, WITHIN REACH OF THE VINES SPILLING DOWN FROM THE PLATEAU...
...HE HAS LEFT THE OTHERS BEHIND.
OUR KING...HE...HE IS LIKE A YOUTH OF FOURTEEN YEARS...!
AYE...OR LIKE AN APE FROM THE JUNGLES OF KUSH!
WHAT CAN WE EXPECT TO FIND UP THERE, MIMUS?
A CARPET OF WRITHING SNAKES?
NOT SNAKES, O KING, BUT THE GREAT ANCESTORS OF ALL SNAKES.
AT LEAST, SO SAY THE FOLLOWERS OF SET.

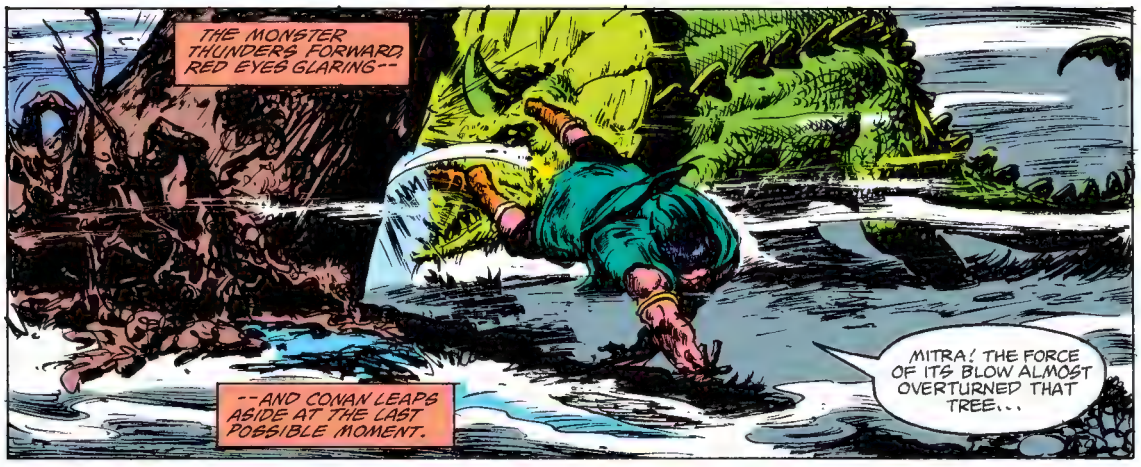

ANCESTORS--? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HUGE REPTILES, O KING -- THE GREAT-DEVIL-BEASTS WHICH ROAMED THE WORLD BEFORE THE RISE OF ATLANTIS ITSELF...
...MONSTERS, O KING.
GRAURR!
CROM!
THE HELL-BEAST RIPS MY VINE!
AND CONAN PLUMMETS--
--BUT ONLY FAR ENOUGH TO REACH A DIFFERENT, STURDIER VINE.
MOVE TO THE SIDE-- AND HURRY!
CLIMB THOSE OTHER VINES TO THE LEFT. I'LL LEAD THE THING TO THE RIGHT--

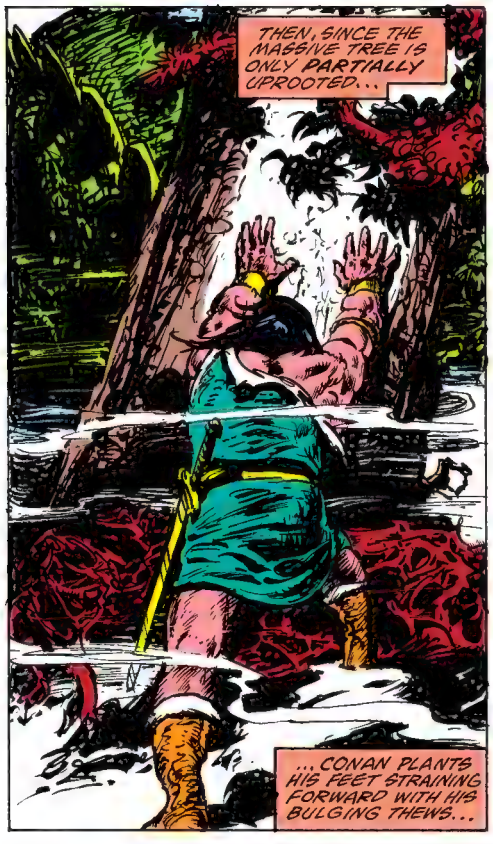

--IF I'M NOT EATEN FIRST!
HAH!
OVER HERE, HELL-BEAST! CHASE ME!
AN INSTANT LATER--
GRAUK
--CONAN IS RUNNING THROUGH THE MISTY, PRIMORDIAL TERRAIN WITH A SNAPPING DEVIL AT HIS HEELS.

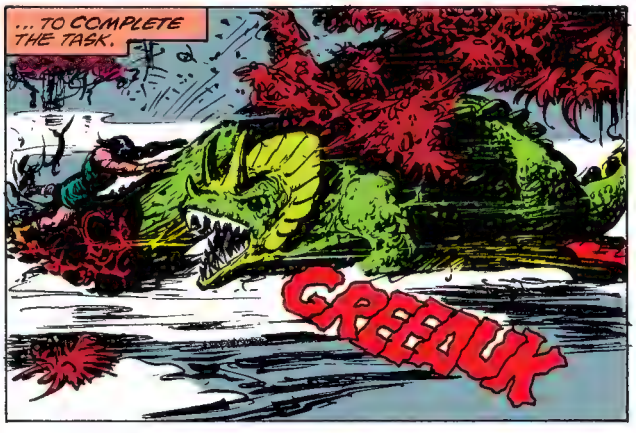
QUICKLY, SOLDIERS! WE MUST AID OUR KING!
AYE--BUT AGAINST WHAT, MIMUS?
FROM ITS ROAR, IT SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS ITSELF!


HIS BROADSWORD MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE, IF HE COULD DRIVE THE POINT DEEPLY INTO THE THING'S THROAT-- BUT THE ODDS ARE HARDLY TEMPTING...
ONE BLADE AGAINST THREE HORNS AND SCORES OF RAZOR-SHARP TEETH...?

NO. INSTEAD, HE SPRINTS FOR THE BROAD BOLE OF THE NEAREST TREE AND TURNS TO TAUNT THE THING.
COME, HELL-BEAST! SPIT ME ON YOUR HORNS, IF YOU DARE!

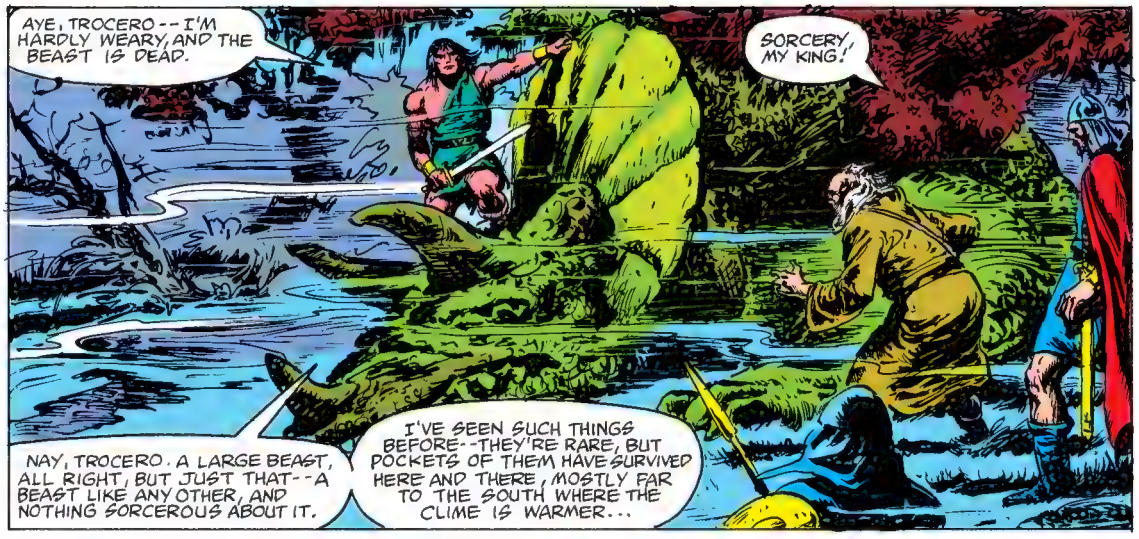

THE MONSTER THUNDERS FORWARD, RED EYES GLARING--
--AND CONAN LEAPS ASIDE AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT.
MITRA! THE FORCE OF ITS BLOW ALMOST OVERTURNED THAT TREE...

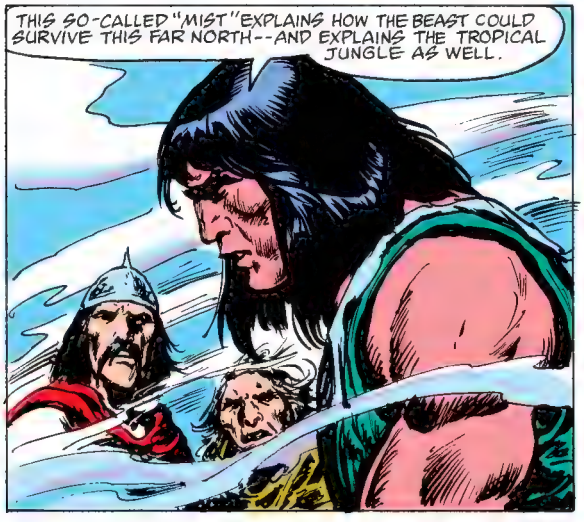

THEN, SINCE THE MASSIVE TREE IS ONLY PARTIALLY UPROOTED...
...CONAN PLANTS HIS FEET STRAINING FORWARD WITH HIS BULGING THEWS...


...TO COMPLETE THE TASK.
GREEOUK

NOW, DEVIL...
WITH YOUR HORNS PINNED, THE ODDS FAVOR MY BLADE!

I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THE KING... HE...HE... SLAYS THE MONSTER!
MITRA! THE SIZE OF IT! OH, MY DAUGHTER--MY POOR DARWEENA!
CONAN--! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!


AYE, TROCERO--I'M HARDLY WEARY, AND THE BEAST IS DEAD.
SORCERY, MY KING!
NAY, TROCERO. A LARGE BEAST, ALL RIGHT, BUT JUST THAT--A BEAST LIKE ANY OTHER, AND NOTHING SORCEROUS ABOUT IT.
I'VE SEEN SUCH THINGS BEFORE--THEY'RE RARE, BUT POCKETS OF THEM HAVE SURVIVED HERE AND THERE, MOSTLY FAR TO THE SOUTH WHERE THE CLIME IS WARMER...


THIS SO-CALLED "MIST" EXPLAINS HOW THE BEAST COULD SURVIVE THIS FAR NORTH--AND EXPLAINS THE TROPICAL JUNGLE AS WELL.

IT'S REALLY *HOT VAPORS* SEEPING FROM THE GROUND--EVEN THE GROUND ITSELF IS WARM!
AYE--'TIS INDEED HOT UP HERE, BUT HOW CAN YOU EXPLAIN IT?
THE PHILOSOPHER ALCEMIDES HAS TOLD ME OF THE MOUNTAINS WHICH SMOKE AND ERUPT HOT, LIQUID ROCK. HE CALLS THEM VOLCANOES...

MAYHAP THIS IS ONE SUCH VOLCANO WHICH HAS FILLED ITSELF WITH ERUPTIONS--COOLED AND SOLID ON THE SURFACE, YET STILL BUBBLING HOT UNDERNEATH, CREATING THE STEAM AND HOT CLIMATE.

WELL, LET'S GET MOVING IF WE'RE TO FIND THIS VIRGINAL DAUGHTER OF YOURS, MIMUS.
IN A MOMENT, O KING--BUT FIRST I MUST HAVE A BIT OF SWEETMEAT.
IT IS LIKE AN ADDICTION WITH ME... AND WHEN I BECOME NERVOUS, THE CRAVING STRIKES ALL THE HARDER.
A CURIOUS MAN, THIS MIMUS... BUT CONAN SUSPECTS NO MORE.

THE TREK ACROSS THE STRANGE PLATEAU BEGINS, WITH EACH MAN ACUTELY AWARE OF THE SMOTHERING HEAT AND HUMIDITY. ALL THE WORLD, THEY SAY, WAS ONCE LIKE THIS... AND, INDEED, CONAN FEELS A MOMENTARY BRUSH WITH ALL THE GHOSTS OF ANTIQUITY.

THE MIST IS SO *THICK*, MY KING! IF THE GIRL IS TRULY HERE, HOW SHALL WE EVEN *SEE* HER?

BY LOOKING CLOSELY, TROCERO, UNDER EVERY BRANCH AND BUSH ATOP THIS CURSED PLATEAU.

THE FEELING GROWS STRONGER IN CONAN'S BREAST--A FEELING OF INVADING SOME TIME-LOST REALM WHERE MAN DOES NOT BELONG AND CANNOT SURVIVE.

THE NAPE OF HIS NECK TINGLES WITH DREAD. HIS THOUGHTS GO BACK TO THE MONSTER BEHIND THEM. HE HAS BEEN TOLD--BY ALCEMIDES AND OTHERS-- THAT SUCH LEVIATHANS ONCE RULED THE WORLD...

UP HERE ON THIS MIST-CLOAKED PLATEAU, HE CAN BELIEVE IT.

THE PLACE IS *THICK* WITH MONSTERS.

QUIETLY NOW--I'VE NO CRAVING TO PROVE MYSELF AGAINST *ANOTHER* SUCH AS THEM.

BUT IF THIS *IS* THE WORLD AS IT ONCE WAS, ITS PRIMORDIAL WONDER BOTH REPELS HIS RATIONAL MIND AND STIRS HIS SAVAGE HEART...

IT *TEEMS* WITH LIFE--THE GHASTLY LIFE OF BAD DREAMS, TO BE SURE, BUT STILL...

WAIT.

IN THE CLEARING AHEAD.

DARWEENA-- MY DAUGHTER!

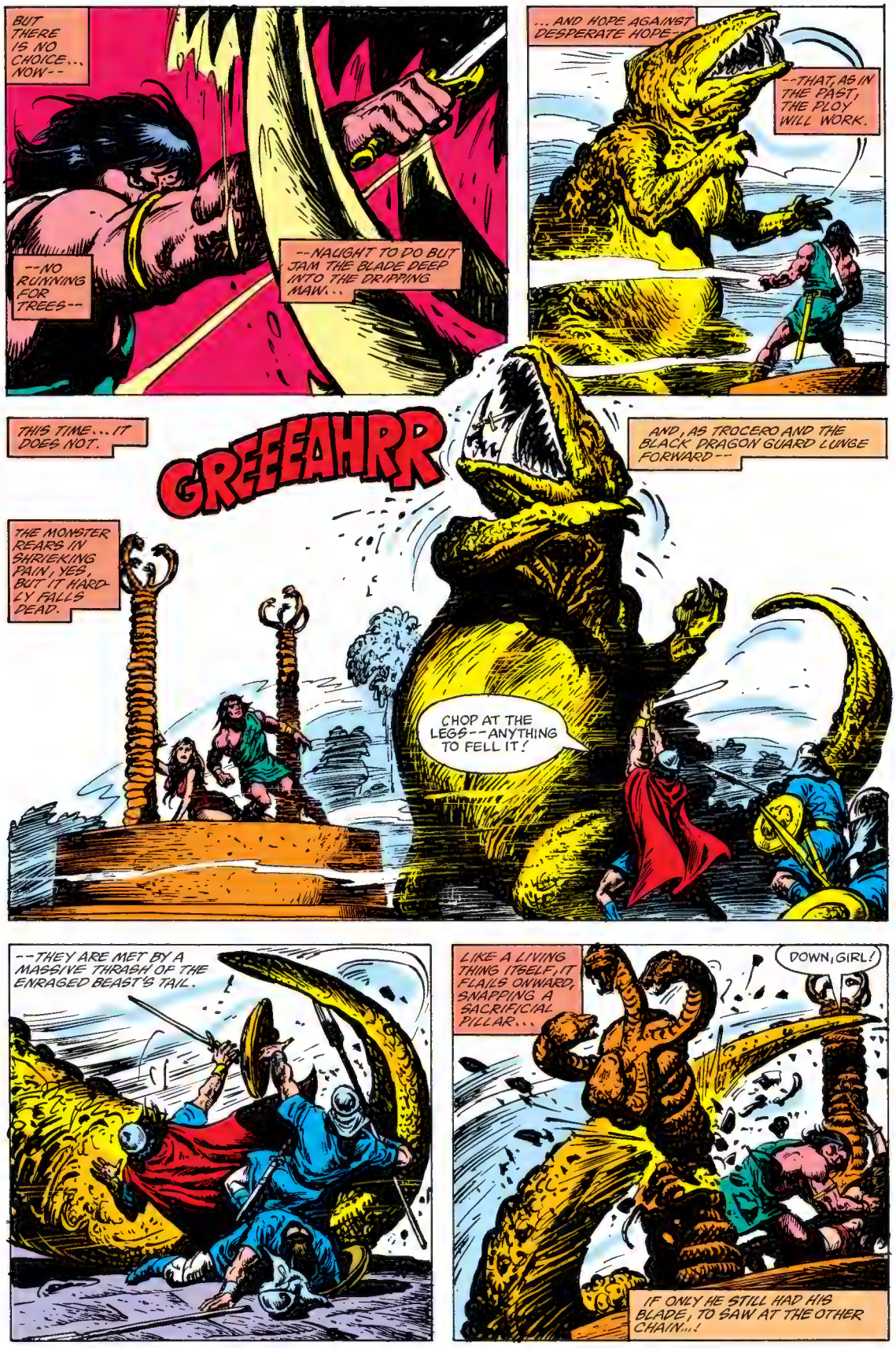
THE SET-FOLLOWERS HAVE CHAINED HER UP FOR SACRIFICE!

AYE, MIMUS... BUT HAS THE SOUND OF OUR COMING SCARED THEM OFF--

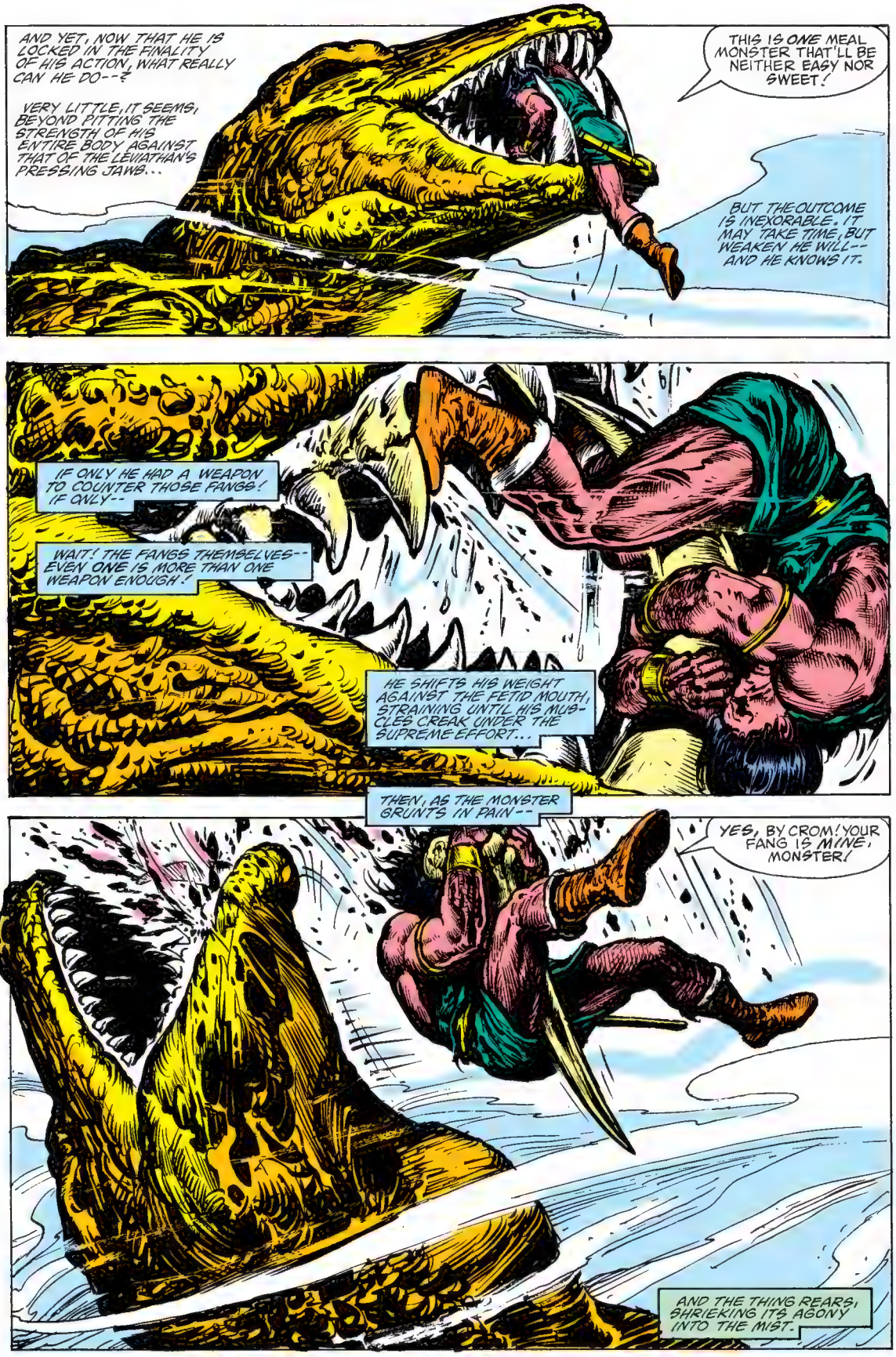
--OR DO THEY LURK IN THE JUNGLE FRINGE, HAVING SET HER OUT AS BAIT TO LURE US INTO A TRAP?

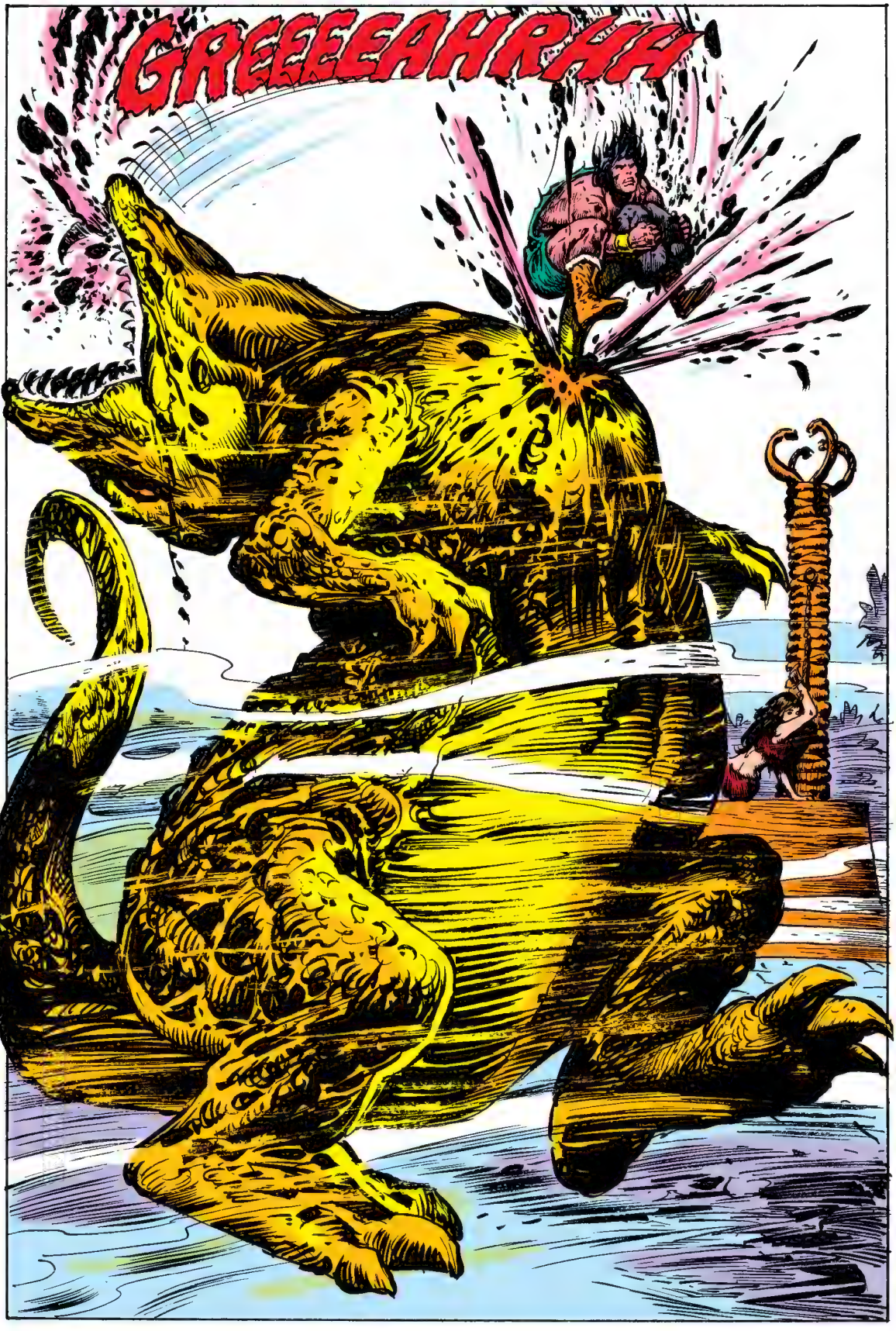
GRAWRRR
EEEEE
AYE, TROCERO...
SAVE HER, MY KING! YOU MUST SAVE MY DAUGHTER!
CONAN! SOMETHING COMES--SOMETHING LARGE ENOUGH TO SHAKE THE VERY GROUND!
AYE, MIMIS-- TRAP OR NOT, WE CAN'T LEAVE HER OUT THERE AS A HELPLESS MORSEL FOR SOME DEVIL-BEAST'S BELLY!
CONAN--MY KING!
YOU--?!
AYE, GIRL--THE THRONE BORED ME.
AND THANK CROM, THIS CHAIN IS OLD AND WEAK...
I SPOKE TOO SOON, GIRL--THE OTHER CHAIN IS NEWER, TOO STRONG FOR MY BLADE...
NOW THE JUNGLE THRASHES OFF TO THEIR LEFT...
...THE STONE DAIS SHAKES AND TREMBLES...
NOOO!!
GRAWRRR
...AND THE STARK FACE OF HORROR LOOMS BEFORE THEM.

NO TRAP OF MAN, THIS! NAY, MIMIR SPOKE THE TRUTH -- IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN A SACRIFICE TO THE GREAT ANCESTOR OF ALL SERPENTS, LOATHSOME IN ITS NIGHTMARE MAJESTY.
CROM AND MITRA!
AGAIN THE GIRL SHRIEKS -- BUT EVEN THOUGH CONAN'S OWN HEART GROWS COLD WITH NATURAL FEAR, THIS WILL HARDLY BE A WILLING SACRIFICE, NOR EVEN A PASSIVE ONE.
GET BACK, GIRL -- AS FAR BEHIND THE PILLAR AS THE CHAIN WILL PERMIT!
THE SAME ODDS SPURNED EARLIER...
ONE BLADE AGAINST FAR TOO MANY FANGS.

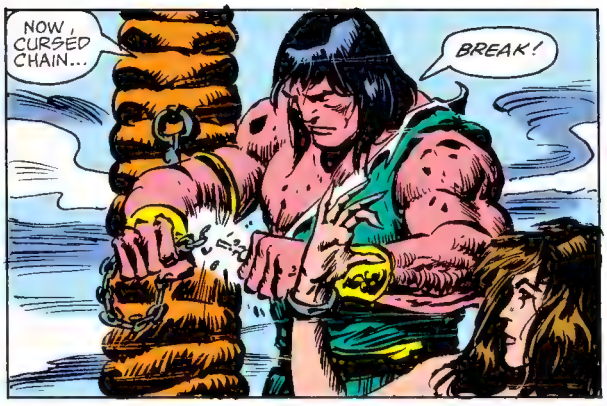

BUT THERE IS NO CHOICE... NOW--
--NO RUNNING FOR TREES--
--NAUGHT TO DO BUT JAM THE BLADE DEEP INTO THE DRIPPING MAW...
... AND HOPE AGAINST DESPERATE HOPE--
--THAT, AS IN THE PAST, THE PLOY WILL WORK.
THIS TIME... IT DOES NOT.
GREEEAHRR
AND, AS TROCERO AND THE BLACK DRAGON GUARD LUNGE FORWARD--
THE MONSTER REARS IN SHRIEKING PAIN, YES, BUT IT HARDLY FALLS DEAD.
CHOP AT THE LEGS--ANYTHING TO FELL IT!
--THEY ARE MET BY A MASSIVE THRASH OF THE ENRAGED BEAST'S TAIL.
LIKE A LIVING THING ITSELF, IT FLAILS ONWARD, SNAPPING A SACRIFICIAL PILLAR...
DOWN, GIRL!
IF ONLY HE STILL HAD HIS BLADE, TO SAW AT THE OTHER CHAIN...!

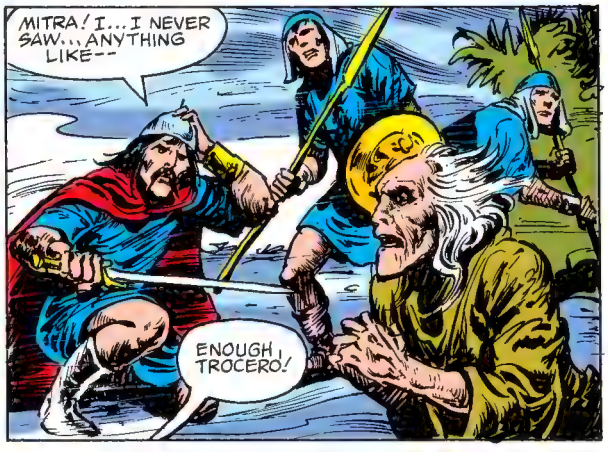
AND THEN, AS IF NO MORE THAN A FLEETING ANNOYANCE, THE SWORD IS PLUCKED OUT--
--CLUMPING TO THE GROUND SOME TWENTY PACES DISTANT.
HE WONDERS: COULD HE REACH IT IN TIME--?
NO--NOT WITHOUT SACRIFICING DARWEENA TO THOSE HIDEOUS FANGS.
STAY DOWN, GIRL! USE THE PILLAR FOR PROTECTION!
THEN, SINCE THERE IS NOTHING BETTER TO DO--
--CONAN THE KING LEADS STRAIGHT INTO THE JAWS OF HELL.
THE STRUGGLE WILL BE DESPERATE; HE KNOWS, NEAR-DOOMED...
BUT STRUGGLE HE SHALL--
--EYES HARD AND TEETH BARED IN THE GRIN OF WOLVES.

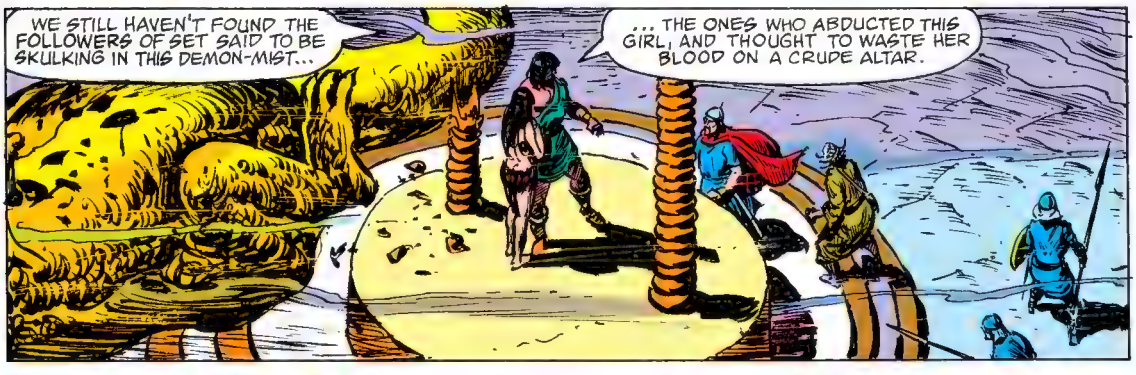

AND YET, NOW THAT HE IS LOCKED IN THE FINALITY OF HIS ACTION, WHAT REALLY CAN HE DO--?
VERY LITTLE, IT SEEMS, BEYOND PITTING THE STRENGTH OF HIS ENTIRE BODY AGAINST THAT OF THE LEVIATHAN'S PRESSING JAWS...
THIS IS ONE MEAL MONSTER THAT'LL BE NEITHER EASY NOR SWEET!
BUT THE OUTCOME IS INEXORABLE. IT MAY TAKE TIME, BUT WEAKEN HE WILL-- AND HE KNOWS IT.
IF ONLY HE HAD A WEAPON TO COUNTER THOSE FANGS! IF ONLY--
WAIT! THE FANGS THEMSELVES-- EVEN ONE IS MORE THAN ONE WEAPON ENOUGH!
HE SHIFTS HIS WEIGHT AGAINST THE FETID MOUTH, STRAINING UNTIL HIS MUSCLES CREAK UNDER THE SUPREME EFFORT...
THEN, AS THE MONSTER GRUNTS IN PAIN--
YES, BY CROM! YOUR FANG IS MINE, MONSTER!
AND THE THING REARS, SHRIEKING ITS AGONY INTO THE MIST.


GREEEEAHRHH

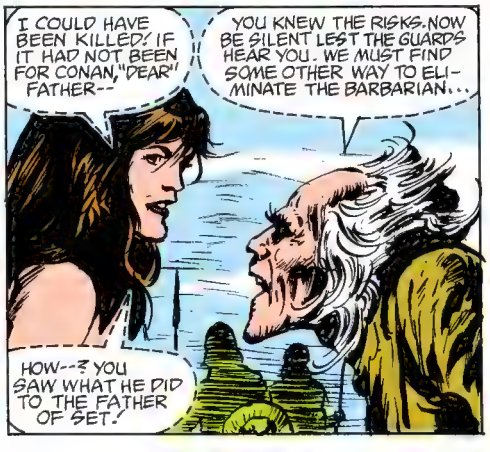
IT'S DEAD.
AND THEN HIS STEELY BLUE EYES DART TO A NAGGING, UNFINISHED TASK...

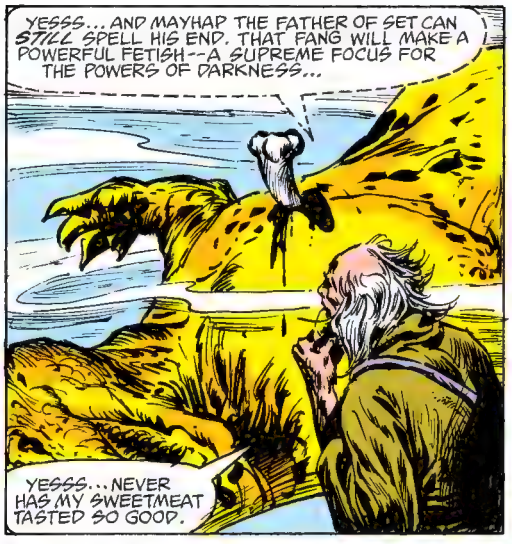

NOW, CURSED CHAIN...
BREAK!

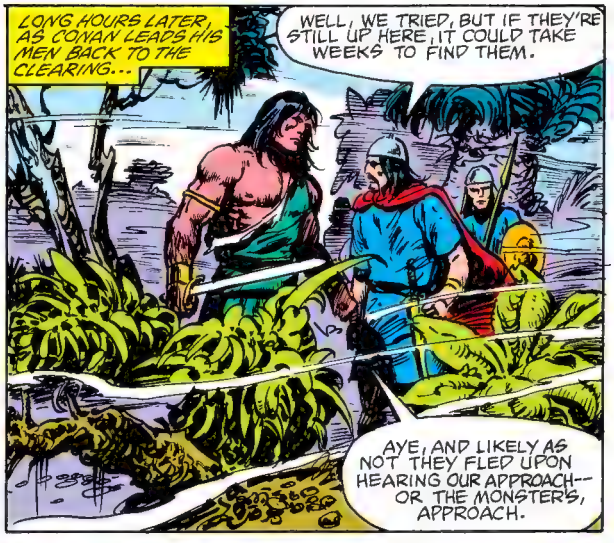

MITRA! I... I NEVER SAW... ANYTHING LIKE--
ENOUGH, TROCERO!

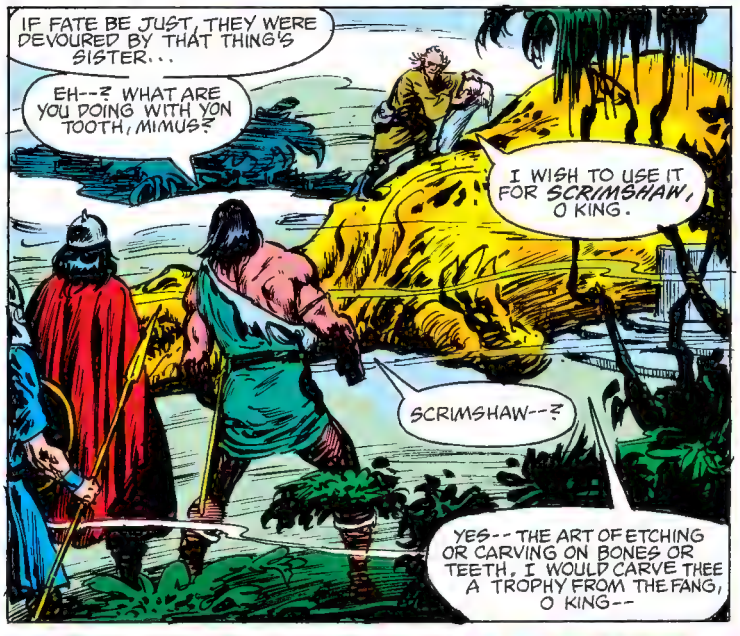

WE STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THE FOLLOWERS OF SET SAID TO BE SKULKING IN THIS DEMON-MIST...
... THE ONES WHO ABDUCTED THIS GIRL, AND THOUGHT TO WASTE HER BLOOD ON A CRUDE ALTAR.

AND AFTER WHAT THEY JUST CAUSED, BY CROM, DON'T THINK MY HANDS AREN'T ITCHING TO GET HOLD OF THEM.
YOU TWO--STAY WITH THE GIRL AND HER FATHER. AND CLOSE YOUR GAPING MOUTHS, FOOLS!

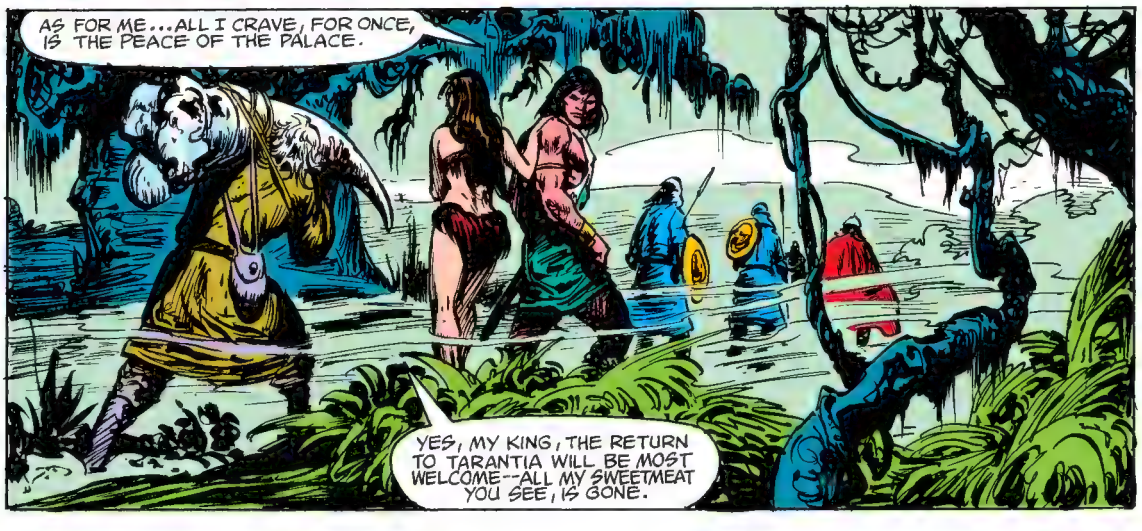

I COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED! IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR CONAN, "DEAR" FATHER--
YOU KNEW THE RISKS. NOW BE SILENT LEST THE GUARDS HEAR YOU. WE MUST FIND SOME OTHER WAY TO ELIMINATE THE BARBARIAN...
HOW--? YOU SAW WHAT HE DID TO THE FATHER OF SET!


YESSS... AND MAYHAP THE FATHER OF SET CAN STILL SPELL HIS END. THAT FANG WILL MAKE A POWERFUL FETISH--A SUPREME FOCUS FOR THE POWERS OF DARKNESS...
YESSS... NEVER HAS MY SWEETMEAT TASTED SO GOOD.


LONG HOURS LATER, AS CONAN LEADS HIS MEN BACK TO THE CLEARING...
WELL, WE TRIED, BUT IF THEY'RE STILL UP HERE, IT COULD TAKE WEEKS TO FIND THEM.
AYE, AND LIKELY AS NOT THEY FLED UPON HEARING OUR APPROACH--OR THE MONSTER'S, APPROACH.


IF FATE BE JUST, THEY WERE DEVOURED BY THAT THING'S SISTER...
EH--? WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YON TOOTH, MIMUS?
I WISH TO USE IT FOR SCRIMSHAW, O KING.
SCRIMSHAW--?
YES--THE ART OF ETCHING OR CARVING ON BONES OR TEETH. I WOULD CARVE THEE A TROPHY FROM THE FANG, O KING--

--IN GRATITUDE FOR SAVING DARWEENA'S LIFE... WITH YOUR PERMISSION, OF COURSE.
A TROPHY IS NOT NECESSARY, MIMUS, BUT IF YOU WANT TO HAUL THE THING ALL THE WAY BACK TO TARANTIA, I WILL NOT STOP YOU.


AS FOR ME...ALL I CRAVE, FOR ONCE, IS THE PEACE OF THE PALACE.
YES, MY KING, THE RETURN TO TARANTIA WILL BE MOST WELCOME--ALL MY SWEETMEAT YOU SEE, IS GONE.

BUT THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN IS MARRED BY SMOKE AND RUIN...
CROM'S BLOOD! WHAT THE DEVIL HAPPENED HERE?!
PROSPERO--EXPLAIN THIS SCENE!
I'M NOT BLIND, MAN! WHAT KIND OF DISTURBANCE?
THERE WAS A DISTURBANCE IN YOUR ABSENCE, O KING.
A MINOR UPRISING--REBELS--THEY TRIED TO STORM THE PALACE AND USURP POWER.
BUT IT WAS HOPELESSLY DOOMED, ALMOST PATHETIC.
I SEE NO PATHOS, PROSPERO, IN THE FACT THAT SUCH REBELS EVEN EXIST TO TRY.
NO KING, MY LIEGE, HOWEVER JUST HIS HEART OR PROSPEROUS HIS NATION, CAN PLEASE ALL THE PEOPLE. BUT TAKE HEART--AND PRIDE IN ONE FACT...
THE REBELS APPEALED TO YOUR IRON LEGIONS FOR SUPPORT, BUT THE MEN STOOD FIRM. NOT A SINGLE ONE AMONG THEM WAS EVEN TEMPTED TO JOIN THE WOULD-BE USURPERS.
CONAN IS PLEASED, BUT LOATHE TO SHOW IT. HE SPEAKS GRUFFLY INSTEAD...
HMP. CARRY ON THEN WITH THE CLEAN-UP, PROSPERO.

BUT AS HE RIDES OFF FOR THE PALACE, HE SPEAKS MORE SOFTLY TO THE FRIEND AT HIS SIDE...
'TIS MADNESS, EH TROCERO? THE QUEEN LEAVES THE PALACE AND THE ENTIRE KINGDOM SEEMS TO FALL APART.
NOT YET, BARBARIAN-KING, BUT SOON... VERY SOON...
"... INDEED... WITHIN THE WEEK."
WELL, MIMUS, I SEE YOU'VE KEPT HOLD OF YOUR DAUGHTER, SO WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS PETITION?
THE TROPHY OF WHICH I SPOKE, O KING.
I HAVE DONE NOTHING THIS PAST WEEK BUT WORK DAY AND NIGHT ON IT.
IT IS HOPED THAT MY CRAFTSMANSHIP IS SUFFICIENT TO PLEASE THE KING--
--AND THAT THE SCRIMSHAW TROPHY WILL SERVE AS BOTH A TESTAMENT OF MY GRATITUDE--
--AND AS A SYMBOL FOR ALL TO SEE THE GREAT FEAT PERFORMED BY KING CONAN ATOP THE PLATEAU OF MIST.
CONAN STARTS FORWARD, CLEARLY AWED BY THE CARVING...
MAYHAP YOU HAVE MISSED YOUR CALLING, MIMUS. RATHER THAN A MERE MERCHANT, YOU COULD WELL BE AN ARTIST. YOUR WORK SHALL BE PERMANENTLY DISPLAYED RIGHT HERE IN THE THRONEROOM.

YOU DO ME GREAT HONOR, O KING; AND NOW, IF YOU WILL PERMIT, I HAVE CARVED ANOTHER--SMALLER AND MORE PERSONAL--PRIZE FROM ONE OF THE FANG'S WASTE-CHIPS.
WILL YOU ALLOW MY DAUGHTER DARWEENA TO PLACE IT AROUND YOUR NECK...?

AYE--IF IT'S OF LIKE QUALITY, MIMUS, I SHALL BE PROUD TO WEAR IT.
I WOULD AGAIN THANK THEE FOR SAVING MY LIFE, O KING.
THE WORDS ARE BARELY MURMURED BY THE STRANGELY SUBDUED GIRL, YET CONAN EITHER FAILS TO NOTE HER MOOD...

...OR DISMISSES IT AS THE SHYNESS OF A YOUNG GIRL CONFRONTING HER KING.
HAH! THE QUALITY IS OF A LIKE KIND, MIMUS!
AND I PROMISE YOU I SHALL WEAR IT, AT LEAST UNTIL ZENOBIA RETURNS HOME.

AFTER THAT... WELL, IF THE BRUTE SCARES HER AWAY FROM MY BREAST, I'M SURE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...
INDEED, O KING--A MERE BAUBLE MEANT TO GIVE YOU AMUSEMENT FOR A FEW DAYS.
AND NOW, FAREWELL--MAY THY HEALTH BE AS UNFAILING AS MY GRATITUDE.

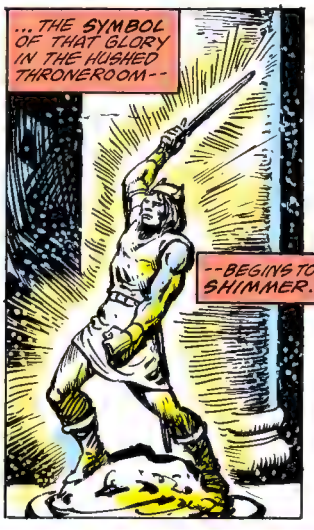
THAT NIGHT, AFTER FEASTING, FINDS CONAN IN A RARE GARRULOUS MOOD...
YOUR NEW NECKLACE REMINDS ME OF OUR ADVENTURE ON THE PLATEAU, CONAN...
AYE, TROCERO, WHICH IN TURN REMINDS ME OF MY YOUTH.

SOMEHOW, FRIEND TROCERO, I ALWAYS KNEW I'D RISE TO BECOME A KING... YET I THINK THE LONG PATH TO THE THRONE WAS MORE REWARDING THAN THE REWARD ITSELF.
OH, I'D NEVER TURN IN MY CROWN, NOT AFTER WHAT IT COST ME TO GAIN... BUT I'M STILL MORE SUITED FOR THE HUNT, I THINK... FOR ADVENTURE AND DANGER...

IT'S WHAT DRIVES ME AS A MAN... MAKES MY HEART BEAT STRONG AND GIVES MEANING TO MY FLESH...
AND YET, CONAN, FOR A KING, YOU'VE DONE WELL BY YOURSELF IN PRESERVING AN AIR OF DANGER AND ADVENTURE.

HAH! I CAN'T HELP IT, CAN I? STILL, I'LL BE GLAD WHEN ZENOBIA RETURNS ON THE MORROW-- TO SHAKE THIS KINGDOM BACK IN ORDER.
GOOD NIGHT, TROCERO. SLEEP WELL.

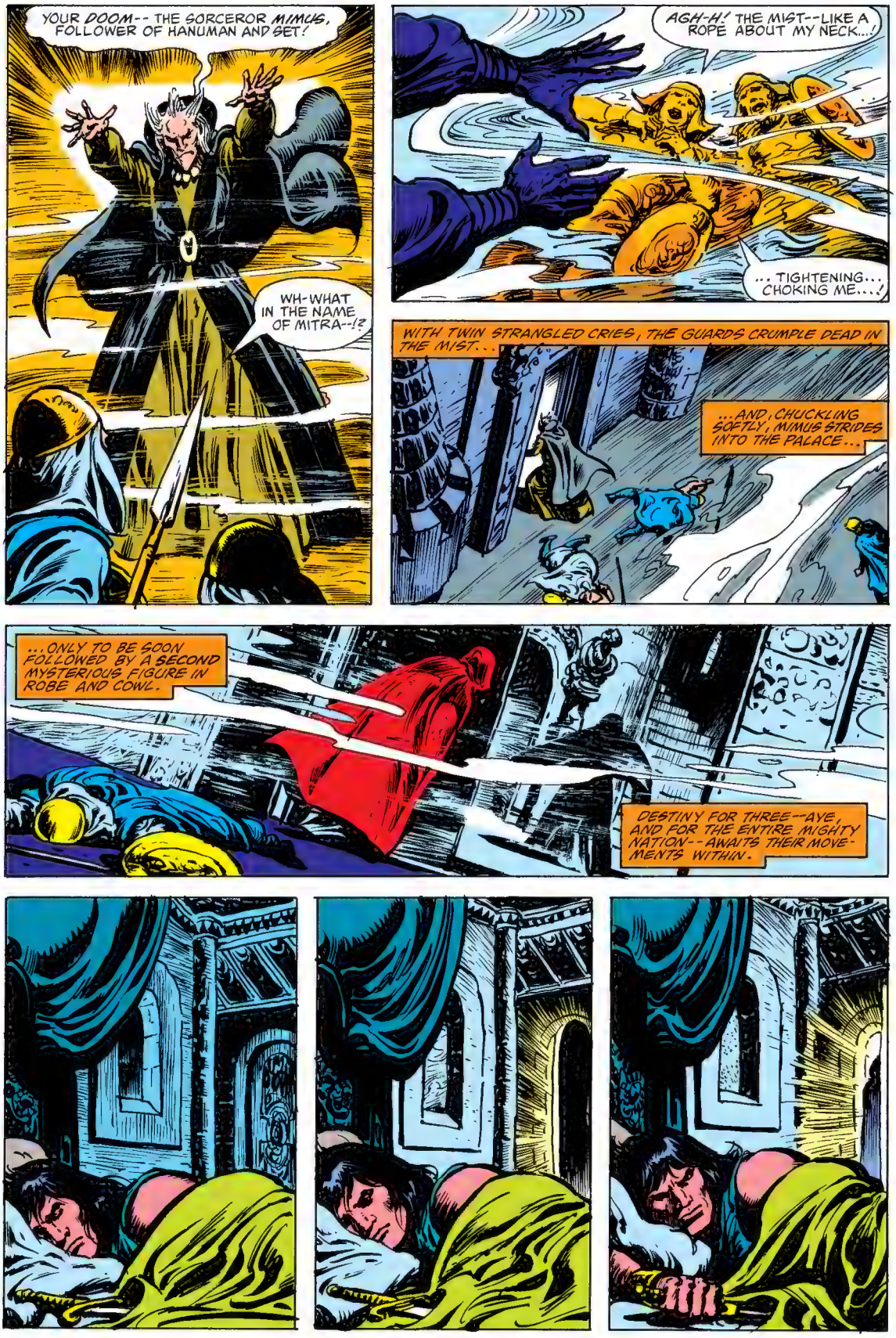
BUT AS THE KING HIMSELF SLUMBERS IN HIS LONELY BEDCHAMBER, DREAMING PERHAPS OF THAT GLORY THAT WAS HIS ON THE PLATEAU...


...THE SYMBOL OF THAT GLORY IN THE HUSHED THRONEROOM--
--BEGINS TO SHIMMER.

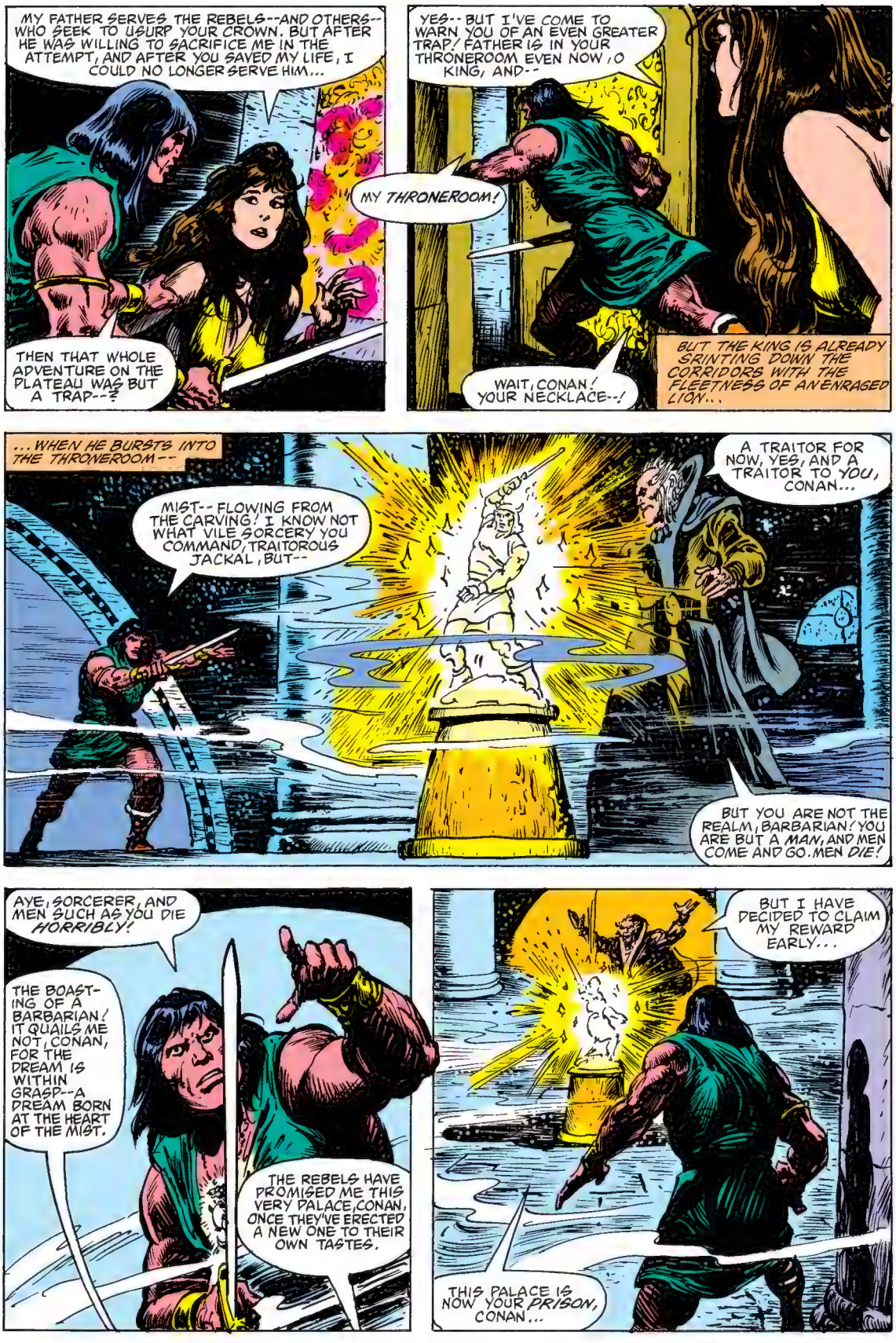
THE GLOW FADES...
...AND A THICK, VAPOROUS MIASMA SEEPS FROM THE FORMER FANG.

OUTSIDE, AT THE PALACE ENTRANCE, THE TWO BLACK DRAGON GUARDS ARE UTTERLY MYSTIFIED...
THIS FOG... MIST... HOW DID IT ARISE SO FAST?!
AYE--'TIS LIKE WITCHERY!

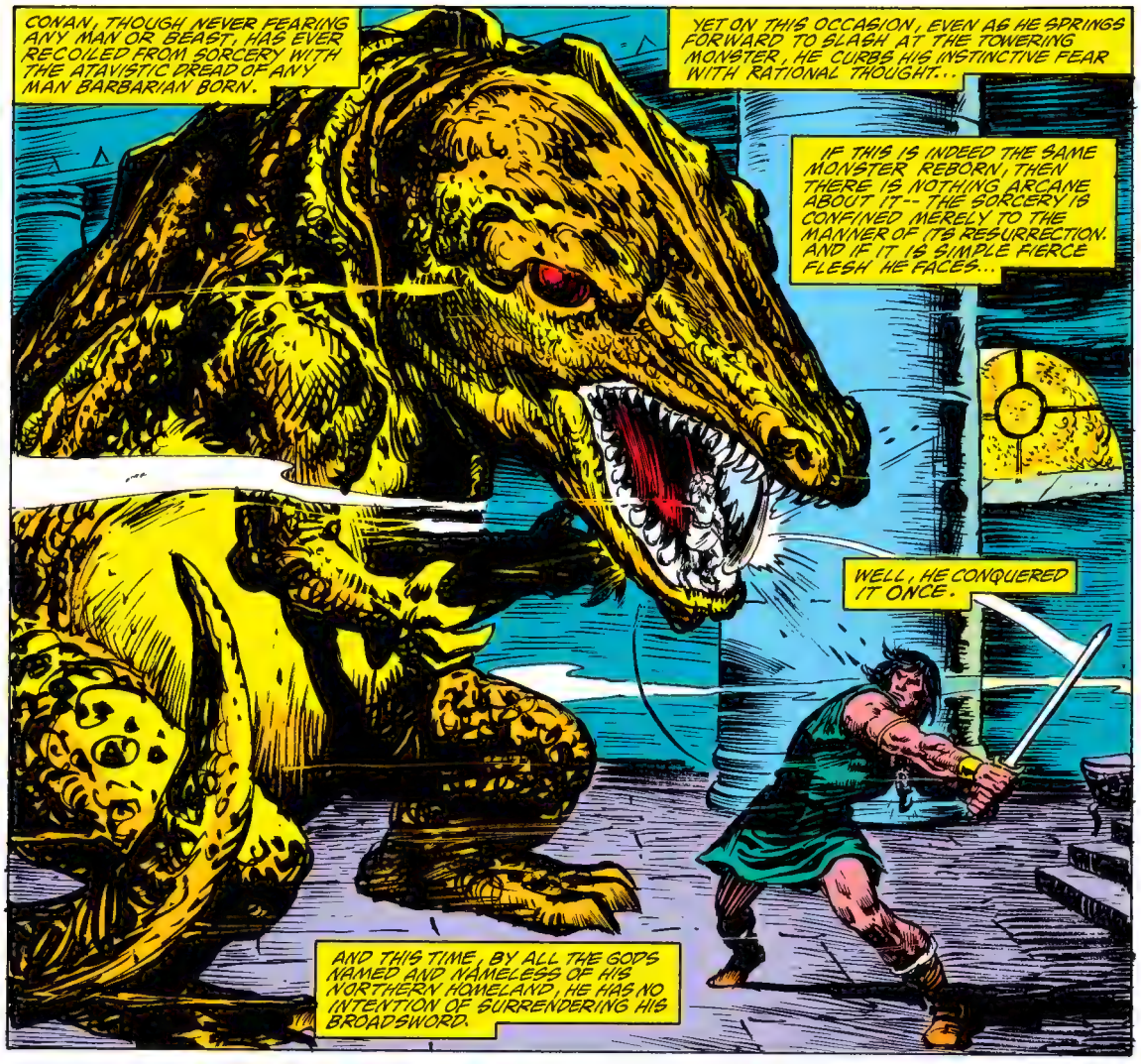
THEN, STRIDING SILENTLY TOWARD THEM THROUGH THE THICK AND SINUOUS VEIL...
HALT! WHO GOES THERE?!

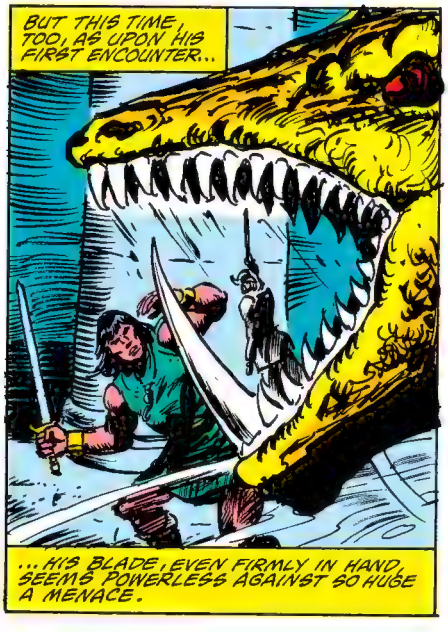

YOUR DOOM-- THE SORCEROR MIMUS, FOLLOWER OF HANUMAN AND SET!
WH-WHAT IN THE NAME OF MITRA--!?
AGH-H! THE MIST--LIKE A ROPE ABOUT MY NECK...!
...TIGHTENING... CHOKING ME...!
WITH TWIN STRANGLED CRIES, THE GUARDS CRUMPLE DEAD IN THE MIST...
...AND, CHUCKLING SOFTLY, MIMUS STRIDES INTO THE PALACE...
...ONLY TO BE SOON FOLLOWED BY A SECOND MYSTERIOUS FIGURE IN ROBE AND COWL.
DESTINY FOR THREE--AYE, AND FOR THE ENTIRE MIGHTY NATION--AWAITS THEIR MOVEMENTS WITHIN.

STAND FAST, CUR!
WHO DARES INVADE MY BED-CHAMBER?
'TIS ME, O KING...
DARWEENA!
AH, COME TO SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE IN A MORE FULSOME MANNER, EH? I'M FLATTERED, GIRL... BUT, THOUGH SHE IS AWAY, I DO HAVE A QUEEN...
WAIT A MOMENT! HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE-- PAST THE GUARDS? ANSWER ME, GIRL, OR BY CROM, I'LL--
THE GUARDS ARE DEAD, CONAN. MY FATHER SLEW THEM TO GAIN ENTRANCE...
YOUR FATHER?! MIMUS--?
YES--AND HE HAS TRANSPLANTED YOUR VERY PALACE INTO SOME MISTY NETHER REALM OF SORCERY! I ENTERED JUST IN TIME!
CROM!
CHANGE OF GUARDS! HOW WENT THE WATCH THIS--
MOTHER OF MITRA!! THE FORMER WATCH--THEY'RE DEAD!
AND THE PALACE--! MITRA HELP US, BUT IT... IT'S GONE!


MY FATHER SERVES THE REBELS--AND OTHERS--WHO SEEK TO USURP YOUR CROWN. BUT AFTER HE WAS WILLING TO SACRIFICE ME IN THE ATTEMPT, AND AFTER YOU SAVED MY LIFE, I COULD NO LONGER SERVE HIM...
THEN THAT WHOLE ADVENTURE ON THE PLATEAU WAS BUT A TRAP--?
MY THRONEROOM!
YES-- BUT I'VE COME TO WARN YOU OF AN EVEN GREATER TRAP! FATHER IS IN YOUR THRONEROOM EVEN NOW, O KING, AND--
WAIT, CONAN! YOUR NECKLACE--!
BUT THE KING IS ALREADY SPRINTING DOWN THE CORRIDORS WITH THE FLEETNESS OF AN ENRAGED LION...
...WHEN HE BURSTS INTO THE THRONEROOM--
MIST-- FLOWING FROM THE CARVING! I KNOW NOT WHAT VILE SORCERY YOU COMMAND, TRAITOROUS JACKAL, BUT--
A TRAITOR FOR NOW, YES, AND A TRAITOR TO YOU, CONAN...
BUT YOU ARE NOT THE REALM, BARBARIAN! YOU ARE BUT A MAN, AND MEN COME AND GO. MEN DIE!
AYE, SORCERER, AND MEN SUCH AS YOU DIE HORRIBLY!
THE BOASTING OF A BARBARIAN! IT QUAILS ME NOT, CONAN, FOR THE DREAM IS WITHIN GRASP--A DREAM BORN AT THE HEART OF THE MIST.
THE REBELS HAVE PROMISED ME THIS VERY PALACE, CONAN, ONCE THEY'VE ERECTED A NEW ONE TO THEIR OWN TASTES.
BUT I HAVE DECIDED TO CLAIM MY REWARD EARLY...
THIS PALACE IS NOW YOUR PRISON, CONAN...

...YOUR PRISON AND YOUR TOMB!
THE MIASMA EXPLODES, A SWIFT AND SOUNDLESS BLOSSOM OF MAGICK...
AFTER ALL, YOU DO NOT REALLY THINK I SCHEMED TO PLACE THE FANG OF SET IN YOUR THRONEROOM--
--AS A MERE TROPHY, DO YOU?
THE MIST--! IT TAKES ON A SHAPE!
AYE, BARBARIAN-KING, THE SHAPE OF YOUR DOOM...
THE FATHER OF SET--REBORN!!
GREEEAHRR
AND RECLAIMED IN ITS GAPING MAW--
--THE STOLEN AND RESHAPED FANG.

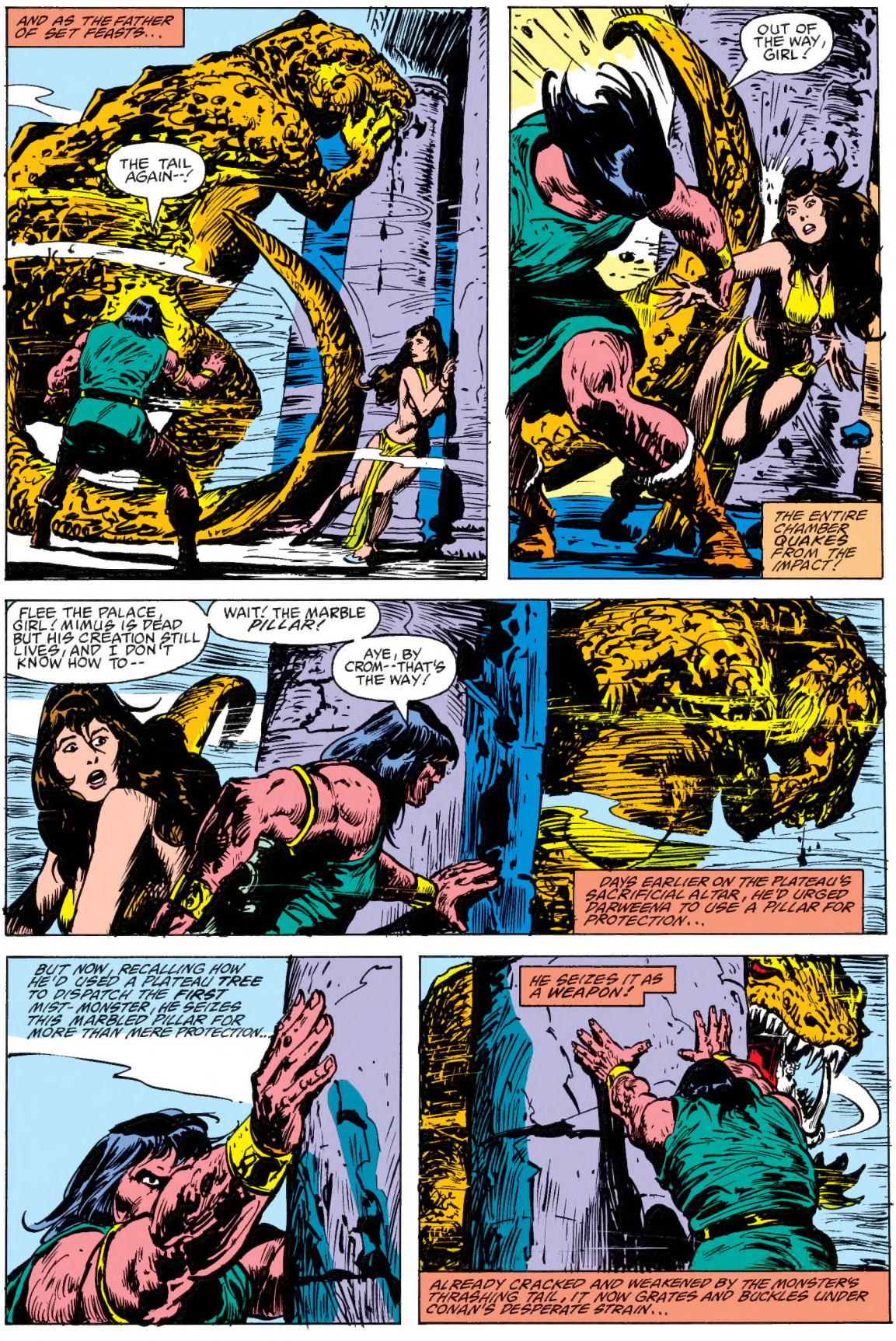

CONAN, THOUGH NEVER FEARING ANY MAN OR BEAST, HAS EVER RECOILED FROM SORCERY WITH THE ATAVISTIC DREAD OF ANY MAN BARBARIAN BORN.
YET ON THIS OCCASION, EVEN AS HE SPRINGS FORWARD TO SLASH AT THE TOWERING MONSTER, HE CURBS HIS INSTINCTIVE FEAR WITH RATIONAL THOUGHT...
IF THIS IS INDEED THE SAME MONSTER REBORN, THEN THERE IS NOTHING ARCANE ABOUT IT-- THE SORCERY IS CONFINED MERELY TO THE MANNER OF ITS RESURRECTION. AND IF IT IS SIMPLE FIERCE FLESH HE FACES...
WELL, HE CONQUERED IT ONCE.
AND THIS TIME, BY ALL THE GODS NAMED AND NAMELESS OF HIS NORTHERN HOMELAND, HE HAS NO INTENTION OF SURRENDERING HIS BROADSWORD.

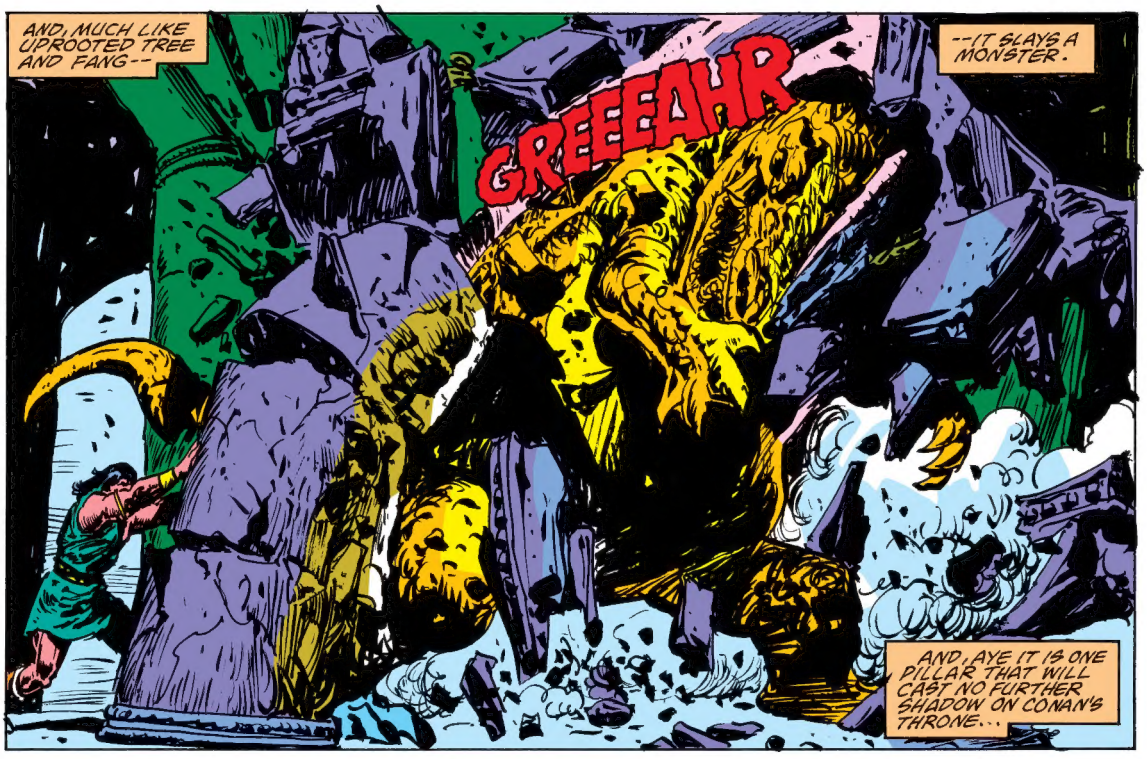

BUT THIS TIME, TOO, AS UPON HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER...
...HIS BLADE, EVEN FIRMLY IN HAND, SEEMS POWERLESS AGAINST SO HUGE A MENACE.

YOUR PLIGHT IS HOPELESS, CONAN! NO MAN CAN TWICE DO WHAT YOU DID ONCE!
INDEED, THE MONSTER KEEPS COMING BACK AT HIM, SNAPPING THOSE TERRIBLE JAWS TIME AND AGAIN...

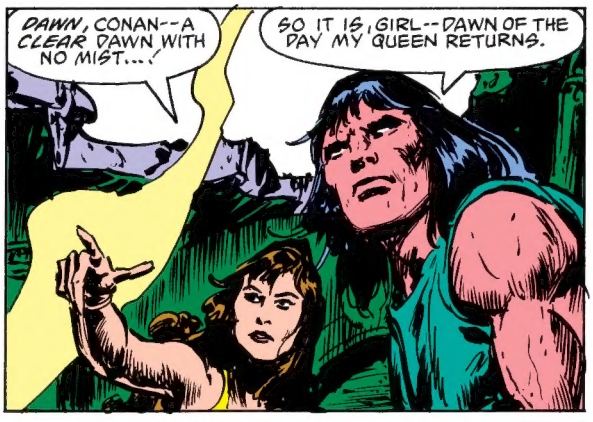
AND CONAN CANNOT SHAKE THE GRIM FEELING THAT HE IS SOMEHOW FIGHTING HIMSELF--LITERALLY AS WELL AS SYMBOLICALLY...

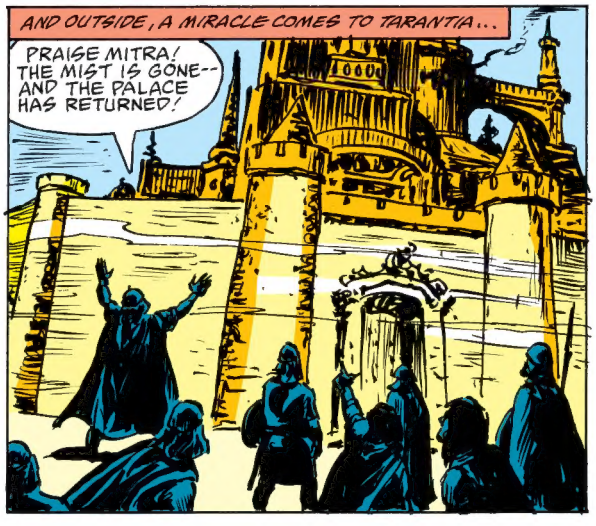
FOR ALL HIS SLASHING AND HACKING, HIS GREATEST WEAPON THUS FAR HAS BEEN SIMPLE EVASION, AND SOON EVEN THE SIMPLE ENERGY FOR THAT WILL FADE...
CONAN--YOUR NECKLACE! THE MONSTER SEEKS THE NECKLACE!
BY CROM, GIRL, YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH!
THE CURSED THING GLOWS!
YOU FOOL, DARWEENA!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!
SHE IS TRADING HER ALLEGIANCE, SORCEROR--TO HER KING!
OVER HERE, MONSTER--HERE'S YOUR MEAL!
AND MAY YOU FIND THE MEAT SWEET!
AAIEEE

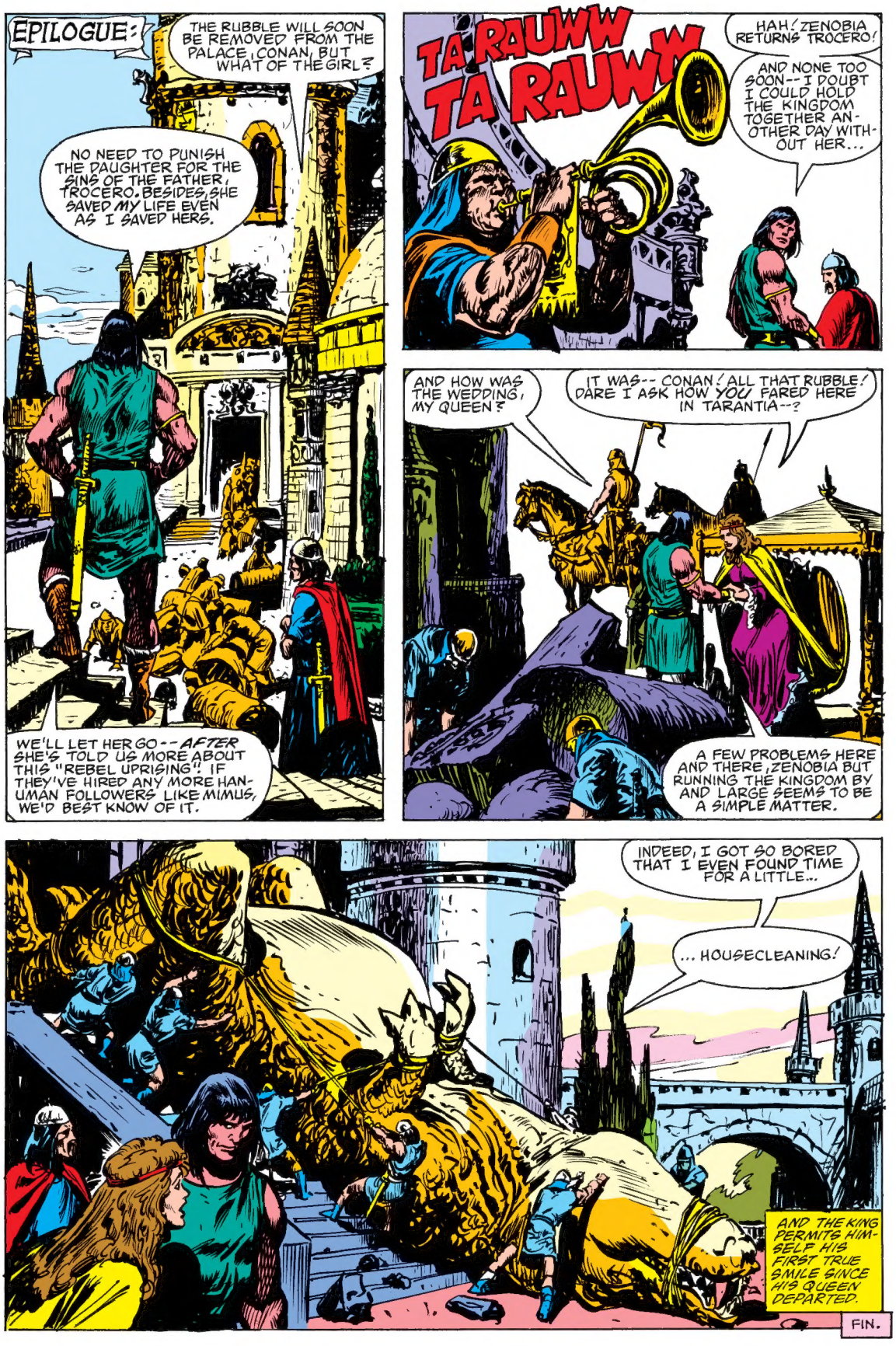

AND AS THE FATHER OF SET FEASTS...
THE TAIL AGAIN--!
OUT OF THE WAY, GIRL!
THE ENTIRE CHAMBER QUAKES FROM THE IMPACT!
FLEE THE PALACE, GIRL! MIMUS IS DEAD BUT HIS CREATION STILL LIVES, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO--
WAIT! THE MARBLE PILLAR!
AYE, BY CROM--THAT'S THE WAY!
DAYS EARLIER ON THE PLATEAU'S SACRIFICIAL ALTAR, HE'D URGED DARWEENA TO USE A PILLAR FOR PROTECTION...
BUT NOW, RECALLING HOW HE'D USED A PLATEAU TREE TO DISPATCH THE FIRST MIST-MONSTER, HE SEIZES THIS MARBLED PILLAR FOR MORE THAN MERE PROTECTION...
HE SEIZES IT AS A WEAPON!
ALREADY CRACKED AND WEAKENED BY THE MONSTER'S THRASHING TAIL, IT NOW GRATES AND BUCKLES UNDER CONAN'S DESPERATE STRAIN...


AND, MUCH LIKE UPROOTED TREE AND FANG--
GREEEAHR
--IT SLAYS A MONSTER.
AND, AYE IT IS ONE PILLAR THAT WILL CAST NO FURTHER SHADOW ON CONAN'S THRONE...

THAT'S TWICE.
THIS TIME, BEAST, IF YOU HAVE ANY SENSE... YOU'LL STAY DEAD.


DAWN, CONAN--A CLEAR DAWN WITH NO MIST...!
SO IT IS, GIRL--DAWN OF THE DAY MY QUEEN RETURNS.


AND OUTSIDE, A MIRACLE COMES TO TARANTIA...
PRAISE MITRA! THE MIST IS GONE-- AND THE PALACE HAS RETURNED!


EPILOGUE:
THE RUBBLE WILL SOON BE REMOVED FROM THE PALACE, CONAN, BUT WHAT OF THE GIRL?
NO NEED TO PUNISH THE DAUGHTER FOR THE SINS OF THE FATHER, TROCERO. BESIDES, SHE SAVED MY LIFE EVEN AS I SAVED HERS.
WE'LL LET HER GO--AFTER SHE'S TOLD US MORE ABOUT THIS "REBEL UPRISING"! IF THEY'VE HIRED ANY MORE HANUMAN FOLLOWERS LIKE MIMUS, WE'D BEST KNOW OF IT.
TA RAUWW TA RAUWW
HAH! ZENOBIA RETURNS TROCERO!
AND NONE TOO SOON--I DOUBT I COULD HOLD THE KINGDOM TOGETHER ANOTHER DAY WITHOUT HER...
AND HOW WAS THE WEDDING, MY QUEEN?
IT WAS-- CONAN! ALL THAT RUBBLE! DARE I ASK HOW YOU FARED HERE IN TARANTIA--?
A FEW PROBLEMS HERE AND THERE, ZENOBIA BUT RUNNING THE KINGDOM BY AND LARGE SEEMS TO BE A SIMPLE MATTER.
INDEED, I GOT SO BORED THAT I EVEN FOUND TIME FOR A LITTLE...
... HOUSECLEANING!
AND THE KING PERMITS HIMSELF HIS FIRST TRUE SMILE SINCE HIS QUEEN DEPARTED.
FIN.

KING CONAN

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR
DANNY FINGEROTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Louise,

KING CONAN #8 was great. The cover, story and art were all superb, as usual, and the art team of John Buscema and Ernie Chan are the best Marvel has. I hope the book goes monthly, because I can't stand the suspence of waiting three months for each issue. By the way, I really enjoy the Hyborian Page and the pin-ups, particularly those by Keith Pollard, Ernie Chan, and Gil Kane.

Jeff Stewart
56 Woodbridge Rd.
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 3C9

Thanks for the raves, Jeff. We'd love to make KING CONAN a monthly book — except then we'd have to take responsibility for the nervous breakdowns of everyone involved. But Wouldja settle for *bi-monthly?* 'Cause that's what it is as of this issue!

Dear Louise,

"A Queen Reclaimed!" (KING CONAN #8) was great. The artwork by John Buscema/Ernie Chan was wonderful, as usual. I like the way the story made use of lesser-known aspects of Conan's past. I hope that when Queen Zenobia pops up in future issues, it won't be as a pawn of Conan's foes. Good luck for the future.

Charles David Haskell
15 W. 139th St.
New York, NY 10037

Dear Louise,

I picked up a KING CONAN comic for the first time, and I've fallen into the Conan craze. The art of #8 was so gorgeous,it almost choked the breath from me. John Buscema and Ernie Chan are exceptionally fabulous artists. On other subjects, I see in your letters section that there is a push on for KING CONAN to go monthly. I like the idea as much as the next person, but please don't sacrifice a good team just to step up the frequency. The art team is the backbone of KING CONAN's success. So please don't do it.

Trevor Ayoon
595 The East Mall
Ishington, Ont., Can. M9B 6E9

Wow! That's the first time we ever had a reader beg us to *not* make KING CONAN monthly. But we can't assail your logic, Trevor. We'll never publish KING CONAN so frequently that its quality suffers. Promise.

Dear Marvel,

This is the first time I've written to a Marvel comic, and it's really the first time I've ever felt something was great enough to write about. KING CONAN is superbly written and drawn. John Buscema and Ernie Chan are a great team, so please don't change them. Let other artists handle CONAN or SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, but leave them out of this magazine.

I really hope you come out with SON OF CONAN soon. If you do, I think you should make it a black and white magazine, like SAVAGE SWORD.

Toby Chipman
3914 Nora Cl.
Salt Lake City, UT 84117

SON OF CONAN?! It's hard enough putting out an average of 100 pages per month of Conan now, Toby. Prince Conn'll just have to wait his turn. Of course, if we were deluged with letters demanding SON OF CONAN, well... who knows?

Dear Louise,

In KING CONAN #8, you had him cross the Great Wall of Khitai... which is to say, the Great Wall of China, centuries before the modern (more or less) wall was built. Two great walls in China is stretching coincidence past the breaking point unless you can show some connection between them, such as the Emperor who ordered the (re-)building of the wall being aware that a wall existed in Conan's time.

Michael Tirestein
Emory Towers
Orangeburg, SC 29115

And who's to say he wasn't, Mike? Not us, certainly not since you've just provided us with a perfect way out of the puzzle you pose. On the other hand, we won't say he was, since KING CONAN is hardly the place to discuss historical matters from millennia later than Conan's time. In other words, you've just witnessed a mighty Marvel sidestep — and you'll have to draw your own conclusions about the Great Wall(s). Thanks for writing. (Helpful, aren't we?)

Dear Louise,

I'm looking forward to the future of KING CONAN, with one of my favorite writers — Doug Moench — taking over the book. Please keep the quality alive. I can live with a quarterly book, as long as the quality is there.

Mike Sopp
438 W. 32 St.
Erie, PA 16508

We'll try, Mike. Let us know what you think.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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(signed) Ed Shukin — Business Manager

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(signed) Ed Shukin — Business Manager